

GRENDDEL™

VS

THE Shadow®



MATT WAGNER

WITH

BRENNAN WAGNER

GRENDELTM

VS

THE Shadow[®]



GRENDELTM *THE Shadow*[®]

Written and Illustrated by
MATT WAGNER

Colored by
BRENNAN WAGNER

Lettered by
MICHAEL HEISLER



DARK HORSE BOOKS

DARK HORSE COMICS

President & Publisher
MIKE RICHARDSON

Editor
SIERRA HAHN

Assistant Editor
SPENCER CUSHING

Digital Production
CHRISTINA MCKENZIE

Designer
DAVID NESTELLE

DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT

Publisher
NICK BARRUCCI

Senior Editor
JOE RYBANDT

Associate Editor
MOLLY MAHAN



DARK HORSE

Neil Hankerson Executive Vice President • Tom Weddle Chief Financial Officer • Randy Stradley Vice President of Publishing • Michael Martens Vice President of Book Trade Sales • Scott Allie Editor in Chief • Matt Parkinson Vice President of Marketing • David Scroggy Vice President of Product Development • Dale LaFountain Vice President of Information Technology • Darlene Vogel Senior Director of Print, Design, and Production • Ken Lizzi General Counsel • Davey Estrada Editorial Director • Chris Warner Senior Books Editor • Diana Schutz Executive Editor • Cary Grazzini Director of Print and Development • Lia Ribacchi Art Director • Cara Niece Director of Scheduling • Mark Bernardi Director of Digital Publishing

Published by Dark Horse Books
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97222

First print edition: May 2015
Digital ISBN 978-1-63008-223-9

International Licensing: (503) 905-2377
Comic Shop Locator Service: (888) 266-4226

GRENDL VS. THE SHADOW

Text and illustrations © 2014, 2015 Matt Wagner. All rights reserved. Grendel and all related characters are trademarks of Matt Wagner. The Shadow © 2014, 2015 by Advance Magazine

Publishers Inc. d/b/a The Condé Nast Publications Inc. All rights reserved including the rights of reproduction in whole or in part in any form. The Shadow® and associated elements and marks are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Dynamite, Dynamite Entertainment and its logo are ® & © 2015 Dynamite. All rights reserved. Dark Horse Books® and the Dark Horse logo are registered trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. Names, characters, places, and incidents featured in this publication either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, institutions, or locales, without satiric intent, is coincidental.

This volume collects and reprints Grendel vs. The Shadow #1–#3.

DYNAMITE

Nick Barrucci, CEO / Publisher • Juan Collado, President / COO • Rich Young, Director Business Development • Keith Davidsen, Marketing Manager • Joe Rybandt, Senior Editor • Hannah Elder, Associate Editor • Molly Mahan, Associate Editor • Jason Ullmeyer, Design Director • Katie Hidalgo, Graphic Designer • Chris Caniano, Digital Associate • Rachel Kilbury, Digital Assistant

Online at www.DYNAMITE.com
On Twitter @dynamitecomics
On Facebook /Dynamitecomics
On YouTube /Dynamitecomics
On Tumblr dynamitecomics.tumblr.com

INTRODUCTION

By Patton Oswalt



JUSTICE STAINED with darkness. Evil refined by twisted versions of honor and nobility. For years (and through countless issues and iterations) Matt Wagner's master criminal Grendel navigated those lines. While Grendel was an elegant psychopath with impeccable taste, his archenemy was Argent, a bestial outcast with an unshakable heart of goodness. It was an instantly addictive, fertile territory in which to base a crime epic. Numerous rereadings only reveal more and more of the full-spectrum gray areas that Wagner wanted to explore.

Which is why it's so exciting to see Wagner pit his greatest creation against the ur-avenger in crime pulp, the Shadow. Was there ever a simpler, more evocative name for the kind of noir hero that could go up against privileged, smiling evil? A reformed crime lord himself, the Shadow (and his alter ego, Lamont Cranston/Kent Allard) is adept at tracking and foiling criminals because he's already trodden the steps they're tentatively taking. Grendel (and his alter ego, the genius novelist Hunter Rose) is the insatiable crime lord who is just as contemptuous of the shortsighted

greed of his criminal brethren as he is of the plodding forces of law and order pursuing him.

A lesser writer and artist would make a hash of these two foes, who constantly test, vex, and secretly fascinate one another. But Matt Wagner is like a ballet choreographer on three hours' sleep and three days of amphetamines. The panels inside these pages sting and swoop, horrify and exhilarate, amuse and disturb.

Notice how I'm not giving away any plot details? That's because the twists and turns are too much fun to even hint at. And not only between the Shadow and the time-displaced Grendel, but also among the major and minor crime and police figures caught in the smoky tendrils of their war.

The weed of crime bears bitter fruit. The Shadow knows—but Grendel's got a pretty strong rebuttal.

Patton Oswalt is a standup comedian, writer, and actor. He's also a lover of comic books.

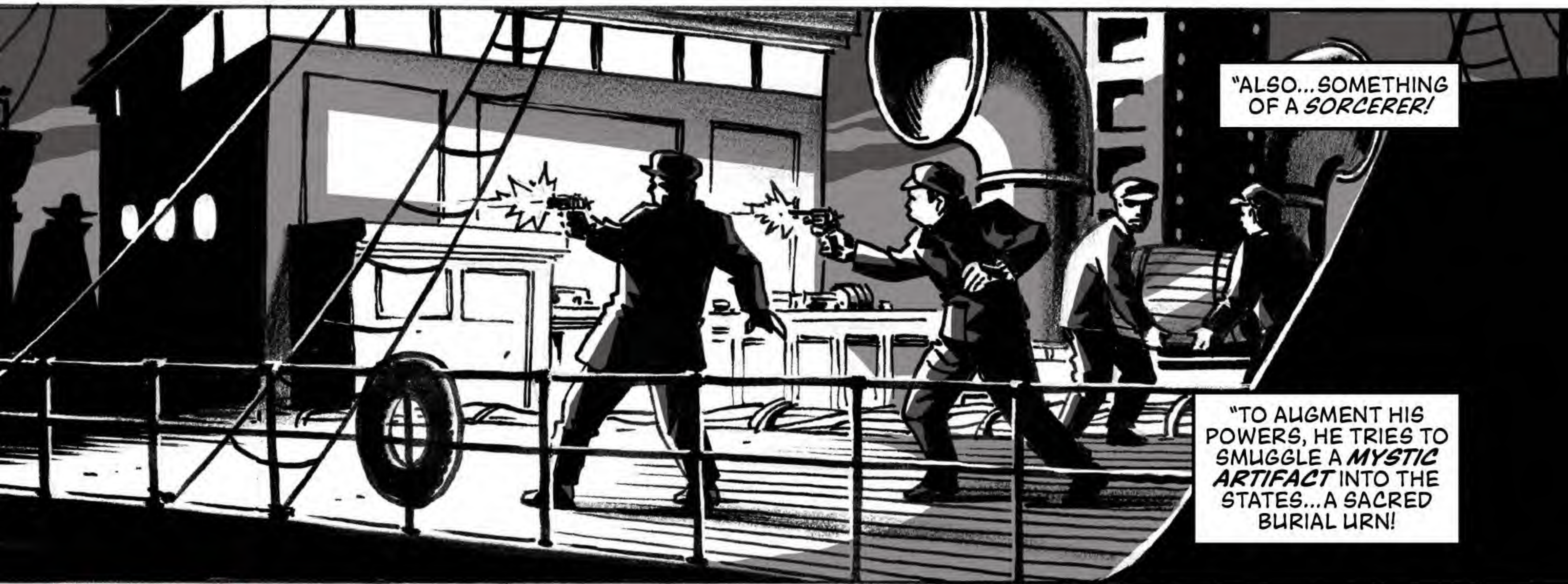






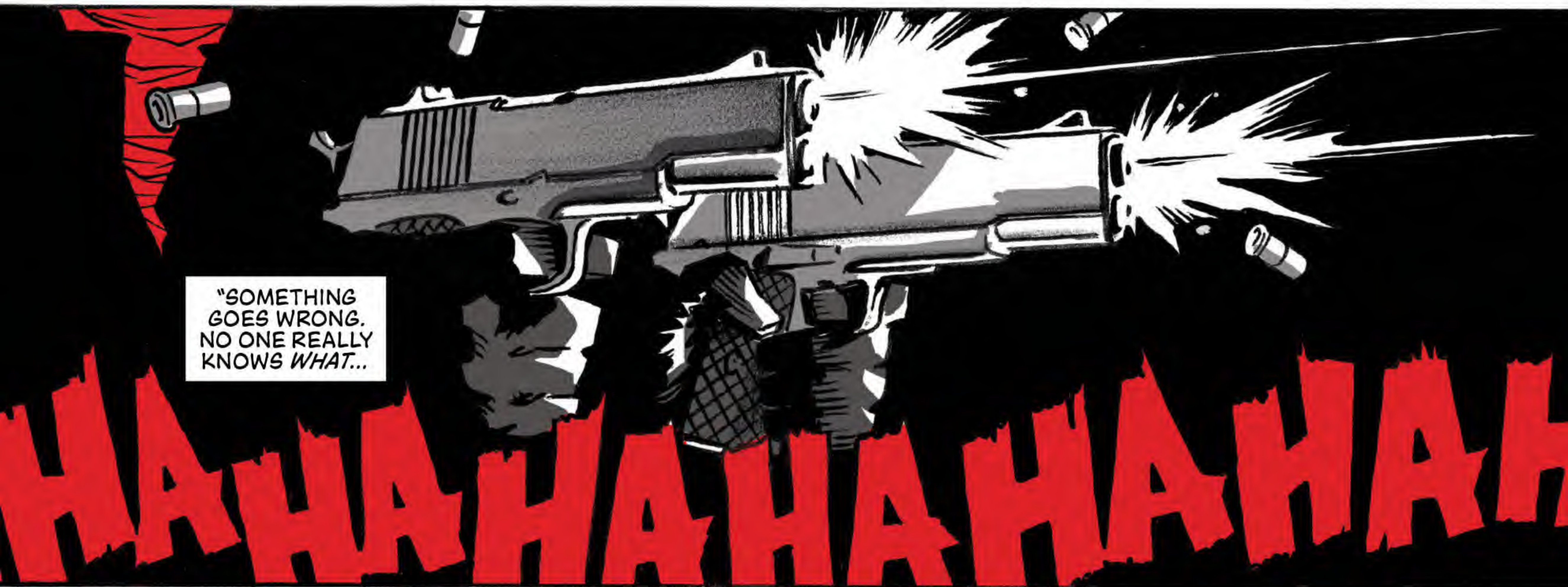
"SO, OUR STORY BEGINS
BACK IN THE 1930s..."

"WHEN A NOTORIOUS *TONG*
BOSS...IMAGINES HIMSELF
A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF
GENGHIS KHAN!"



"ALSO...SOMETHING
OF A *SORCERER!*"

"TO AUGMENT HIS
POWERS, HE TRIES TO
SMUGGLE A *MYSTIC*
ARTIFACT INTO THE
STATES...A SACRED
BURIAL URN!"



"SOMETHING
GOES WRONG.
NO ONE REALLY
KNOWS *WHAT...*"



"BUT, IN THE
SCUFFLE..."

"THE URN ENDS UP AT
THE BOTTOM OF *NEW*
YORK HARBOR."

WHICH IS
WHERE YOU
UNEARTHED
IT.

A dreary September.

*Via covert sources, I've
been approached by
a pair of professional
treasure hunters.*

*The sort who imagine themselves
as grand adventurers but are,
in fact, little more than bipedal
groundhogs. Burrowing through
ages of muck for what the
world has all but forgotten.*

*Wishing to avoid messy
claims of international
ownership, they've brought
their latest relic to me.*

YES, SIR. I
ASSURE YOU, OUR
CREDENTIALS ARE
IMPECCABLE...

IF THEY
WEREN'T...YOU'D
HAVE BEEN DEAD
THE MINUTE YOU
WALKED THROUGH
THAT DOOR.

AH.
YES, WELL...
WE UNDERSTOOD
THAT YOU HAVE AN
APPRECIATION FOR
THIS SORT OF
ITEM.



BONNIE PARKER
MACHINE GUN

*In fact, I do maintain
a collection of some
historical significance.*



ALDOUS HUXLEY
SPECTACLES



AL CAPONE
CIGAR TRIMMER



CHARLES DICKENS
QUILL AND INK



WILLIAM FAULKNER
HIP FLASK



*Objects that appeal to
my own private interests.*

SWEENEY TODD
SHAVING RAZOR



ERNEST HEMINGWAY
TYPEWRITER



JESSE JAMES
GUN BELT



NED KELLY
ARMORED HELMET

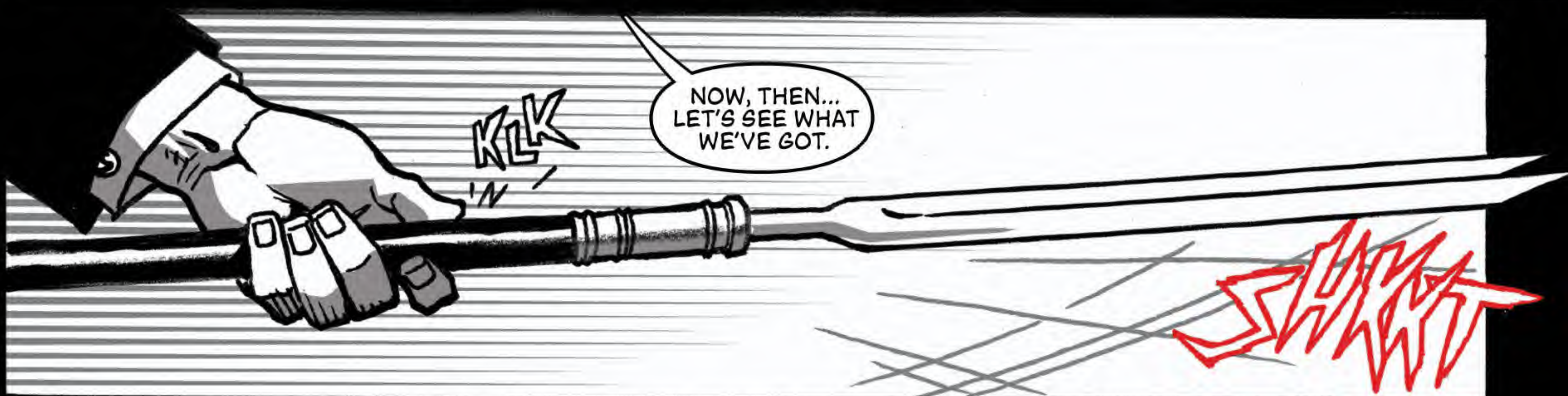
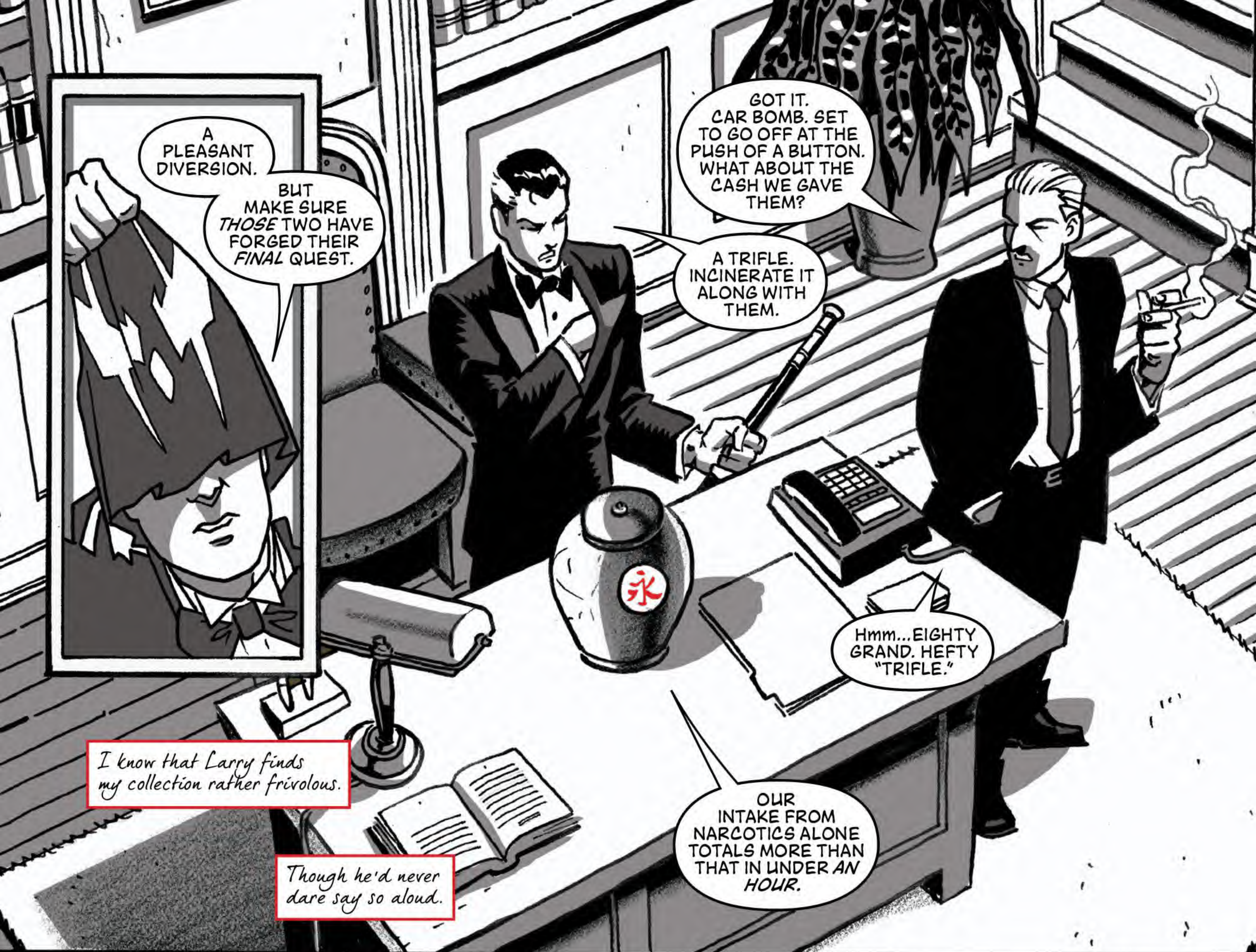
*And, yes...the urn
intrigued me. A
deal was struck.*



The exchange made.



OSCAR WILDE
WALKING STICK





A
SCROLL.



NEARLY
PRISTINE. THE
CHINESE DID
INVENT PAPER
CRAFT, AFTER
ALL.



ANCIENT
MANDARIN.
THE "ETERNITY...
CODEX," I SUPPOSE,
IS THE NEAREST
TRANSLATION.



HA!
IT'S A SPELL!
SOME SORT OF...
LONGEVITY
HEX?

*<BEHOLD, THE REALM OF ENDLESS TIDES,
THE WAVES THAT EBB AND RISE WITH RADIANT
SUN AND MOON. AGLOW WITH RAPID EONS.
AWASH WITH MOMENTS NEVER ENDING.
ALL IS FORWARD. ALL IS BACKWARD.
NONE IS NEVER. NONE IS NOW.>*

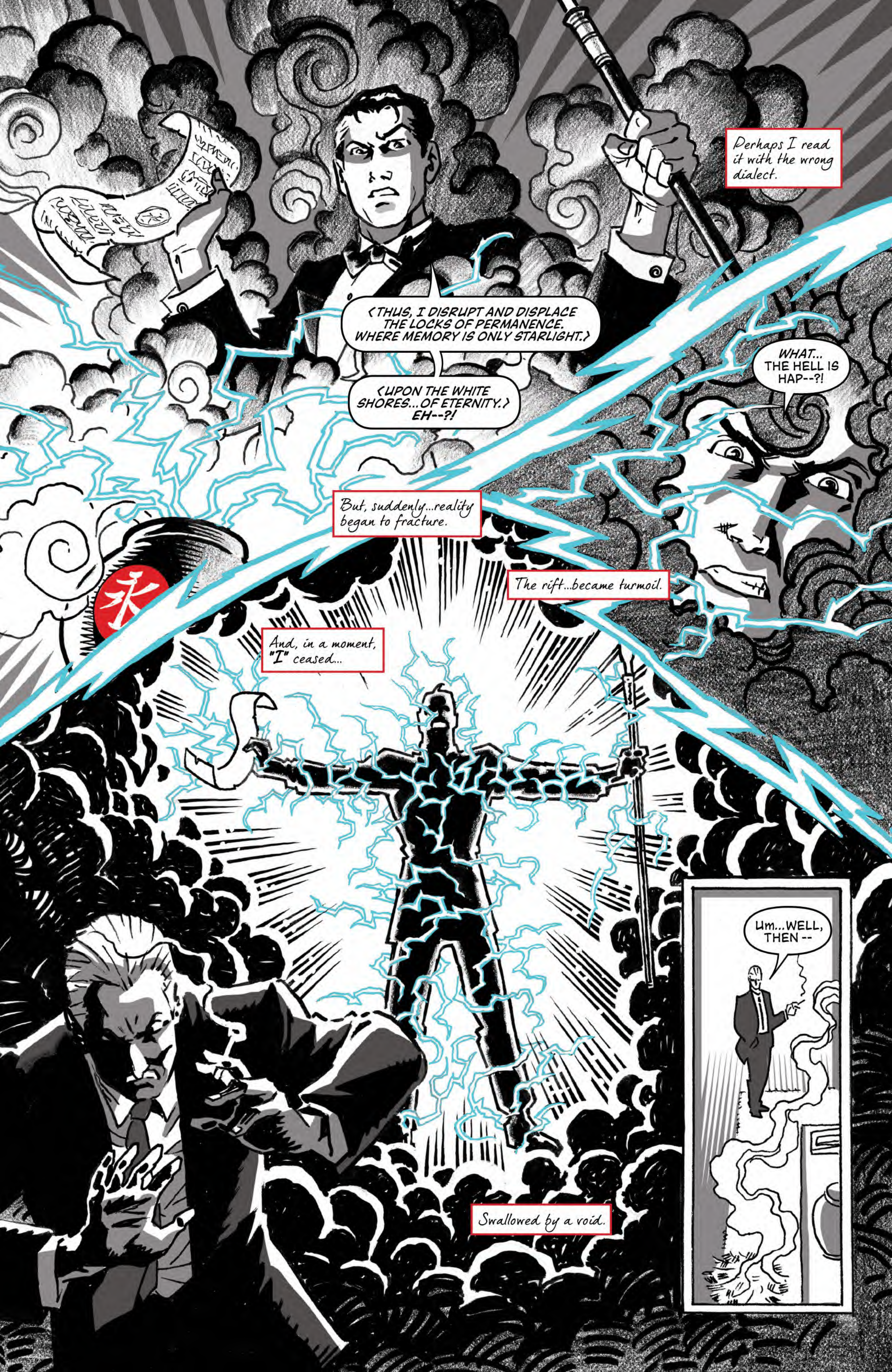
*<I HAVE BROKEN THROUGH
THE NET OF DARKNESS.
I HAVE FREED THE SANDS
OF CONSEQUENCE.>**

Perhaps there was some
nuance in the incantation
that I mispronounced.

*ANCIENT MANDARIN



Um,
HUNTER...?



Perhaps I read it with the wrong dialect.

<THUS, I DISRUPT AND DISPLACE THE LOCKS OF PERMANENCE. WHERE MEMORY IS ONLY STARLIGHT.>

<UPON THE WHITE SHORES...OF ETERNITY.> EH--?!

WHAT... THE HELL IS HAP--?!

But, suddenly...reality began to fracture.

The rift...became turmoil.

And, in a moment, "I" ceased...

Swallowed by a void.



Just as suddenly...

Whole again. Cogent.

Falling.

Luckily...I tumble well.

But...where was the office?

Where was the building?

And then, the greater shock...gazing south.

Where are the other skyscrapers?

In the distance...where are the Twin Towers?!





I quickly realize
how much else
feels...different.

The city's perpetual
roar...slightly muted.

The smells...tinged
with wood smoke and
leaded gasoline.



This can't be
my domain!

Compared to the neon
nightmare that I know,
this Times Square is as
cozy as a Christmas tree.

The car engines rumble,
gears grinding, their
horns honking like geese.



LOEW'S STATE

The buildings.
The signs.
The shows...

The AUTOMAT...?!



How could this be?
Where am I?



Or...when am I?

The long-defunct
Broadway cable line.

HOTEL ASTOR

PALACE
THE MUMMY
BORIS
KARLOFF

CRAWFORD

MAXWELL
HOUSE

THE
OLD

Incredible as it sounds...



*I have seemingly
been thrust into
the past!*



*From the look of it, sometime in the
early thirties. A whole new world...*

*The spell must have
worked! In some fashion...*



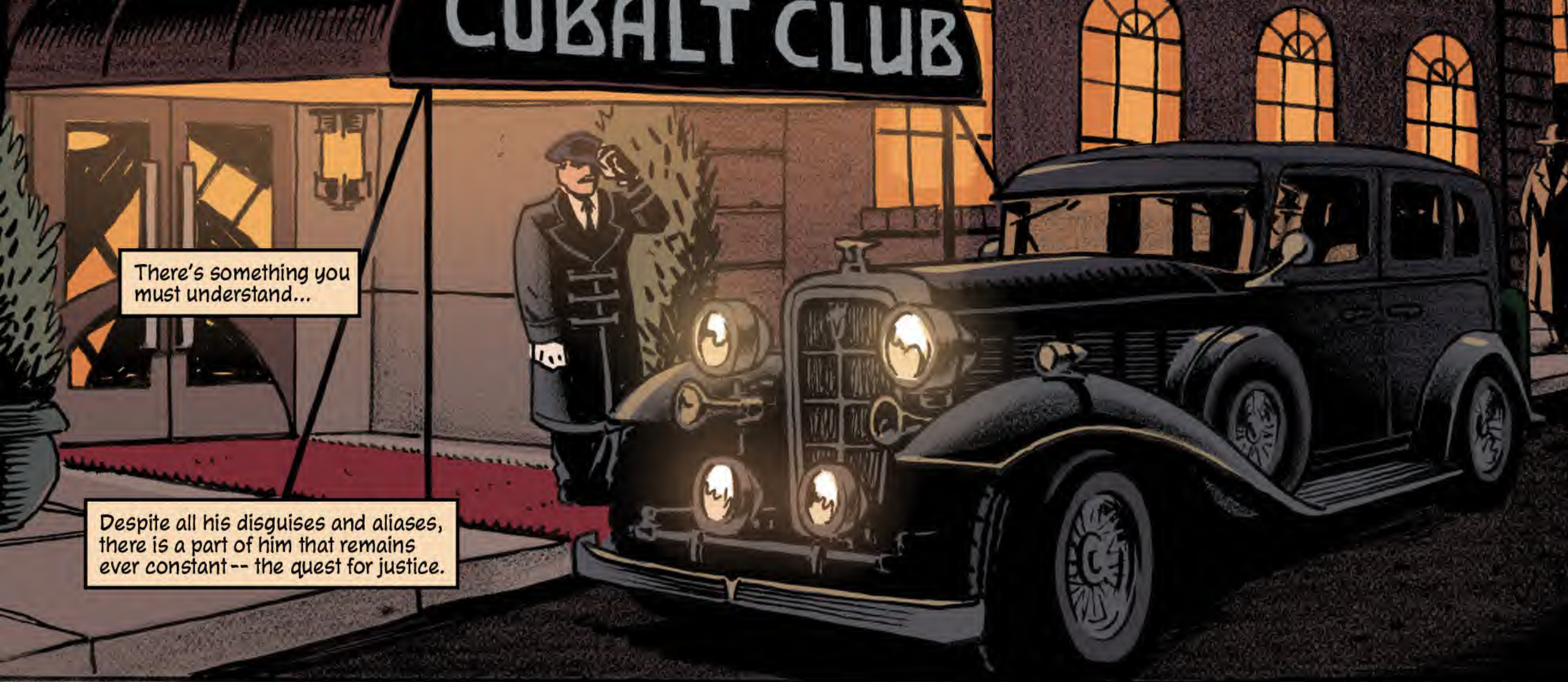
For me, anyway.



*An entirely different
world to dominate
and conquer.*

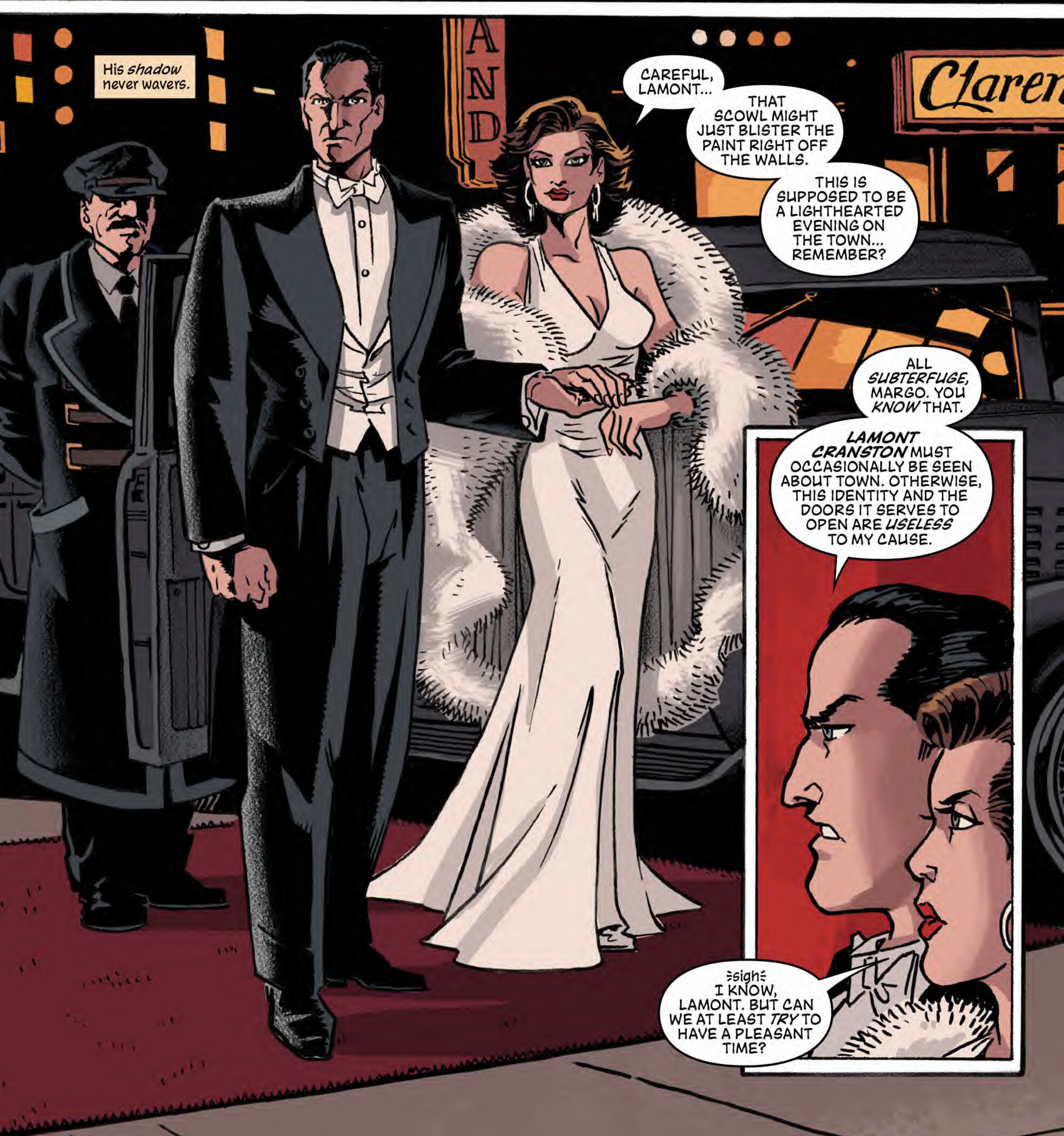
*An all-new challenge...
for **GRENDEL!***

*So, then...let the
games begin!*



There's something you must understand...

Despite all his disguises and aliases, there is a part of him that remains ever constant -- the quest for justice.



His shadow never wavers.

CAREFUL, LAMONT...

THAT SCOWL MIGHT JUST BLISTER THE PAINT RIGHT OFF THE WALLS.

THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A LIGHTEARTED EVENING ON THE TOWN... REMEMBER?

ALL SUBTERFUGE, MARGO. YOU KNOW THAT.

LAMONT CRANSTON MUST OCCASIONALLY BE SEEN ABOUT TOWN. OTHERWISE, THIS IDENTITY AND THE DOORS IT SERVES TO OPEN ARE USELESS TO MY CAUSE.

☹️sigh☹️ I KNOW, LAMONT. BUT CAN WE AT LEAST TRY TO HAVE A PLEASANT TIME?



LOOK AROUND YOU, MARGO. THE REPEAL OF *PROHIBITION* IS IMMINENT. SUCH A FOOLISH ATTEMPT TO LEGISLATE PERSONAL MORALITY.

IT FAILED. MISERABLY.

I've grown accustomed to his single-minded obsession. As with so many other things... I've come to *share* his passion.



WELL, I *DO* WISH THEY'D JUST GET ON WITH IT!

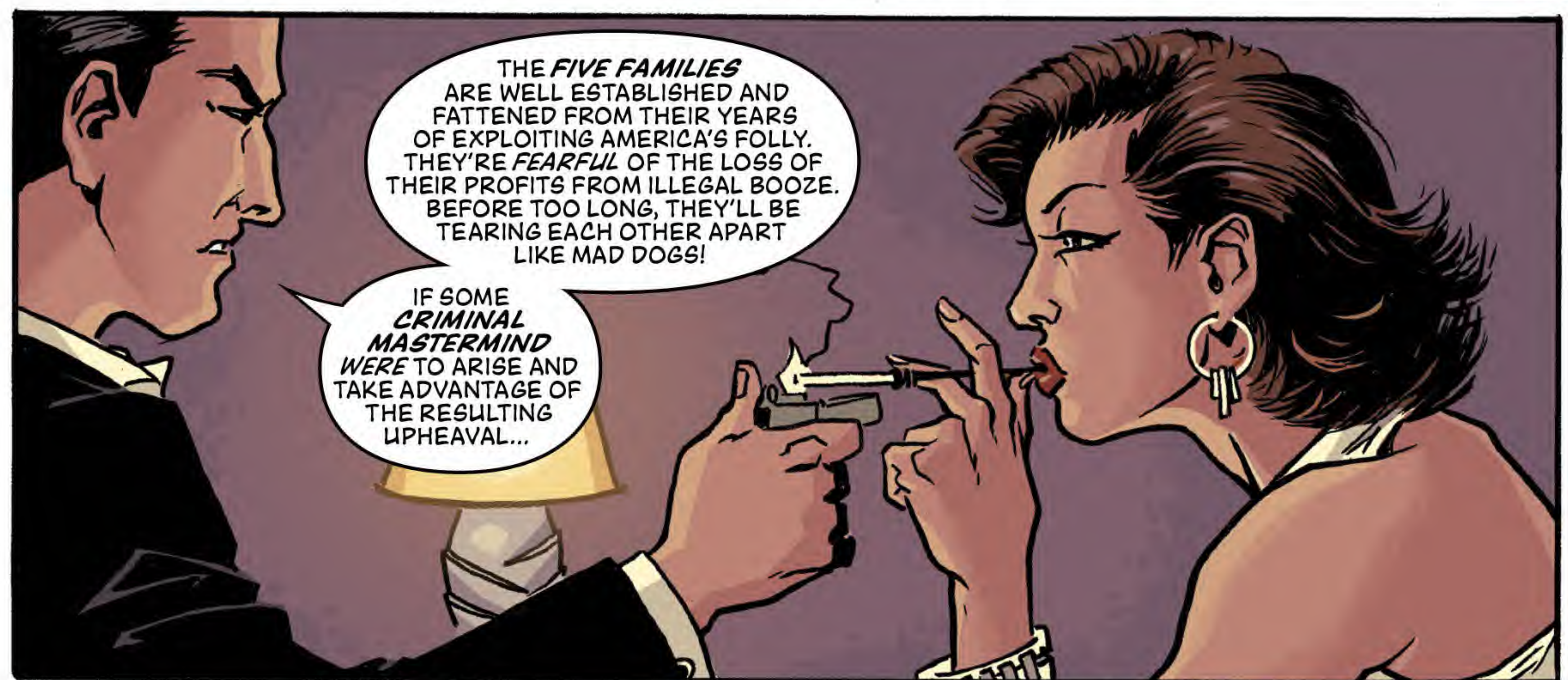
SOON ENOUGH, MARGO.

IN THE MEANTIME, ALL THIS MISGUIDED LAW HAS DONE IS CREATE A SUBCLASS OF WEALTHY AND POWERFUL *CRIMINALS*!

BUT WON'T THE REPEAL *UPEND* ALL THAT?

HARDLY.

YOU THINK THE SYNDICATES WILL EASILY SURRENDER THEIR INFLUENCE?



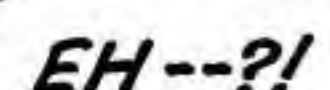
THE *FIVE FAMILIES* ARE WELL ESTABLISHED AND FATTENED FROM THEIR YEARS OF EXPLOITING AMERICA'S FOLLY. THEY'RE *FEARFUL* OF THE LOSS OF THEIR PROFITS FROM ILLEGAL BOOZE. BEFORE TOO LONG, THEY'LL BE TEARING EACH OTHER APART LIKE MAD DOGS!

IF SOME *CRIMINAL MASTERMIND* WERE TO ARISE AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE RESULTING UPHEAVAL...



...IT MIGHT PROVE TOO MUCH FOR EVEN *THE SHADOW* TO CONFRONT!





BRUTALITY
AND IGNORANCE...
ARE THE *HALLMARKS*
OF CRIME!



ITS FOUL STAIN IS BORNE BY THE HELPLESS AND THE WEAK.

JESUS! YOU THINK... THAT'S HIM?!

GOTTA BE.



A RANCID WEED, SPRUNG FROM CRAVEN SOIL!

HERE! HE'S OVER HERE --!



SHIT!

WH-WHERE'D HE --?!

EVEN A VIPER STRIKES ONLY TO DEFEND.

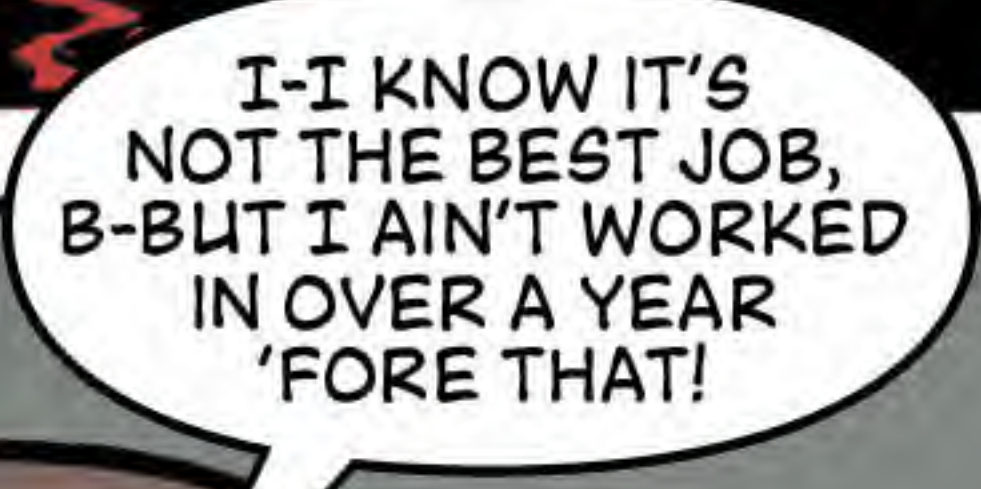


THE
SHADOW
KNOWS!

BANG BANG

BANG BANG

BA





"THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TONIGHT, MY FRIEND."

"WHEN **LORENZO VALENTI** EXTENDS HIS HAND...WHO AM I TO LOOK IN THE OTHER DIRECTION?"



Ahhh... THAT MAKES ME VERY GLAD, NORMAN. WITH *TROUBLING TIMES* AHEAD, IT'S GOOD TO EMBRACE OUR *FRIENDS*.

EVEN AS WE *SCOURGE* AND *DECIMATE* OUR ENEMIES!

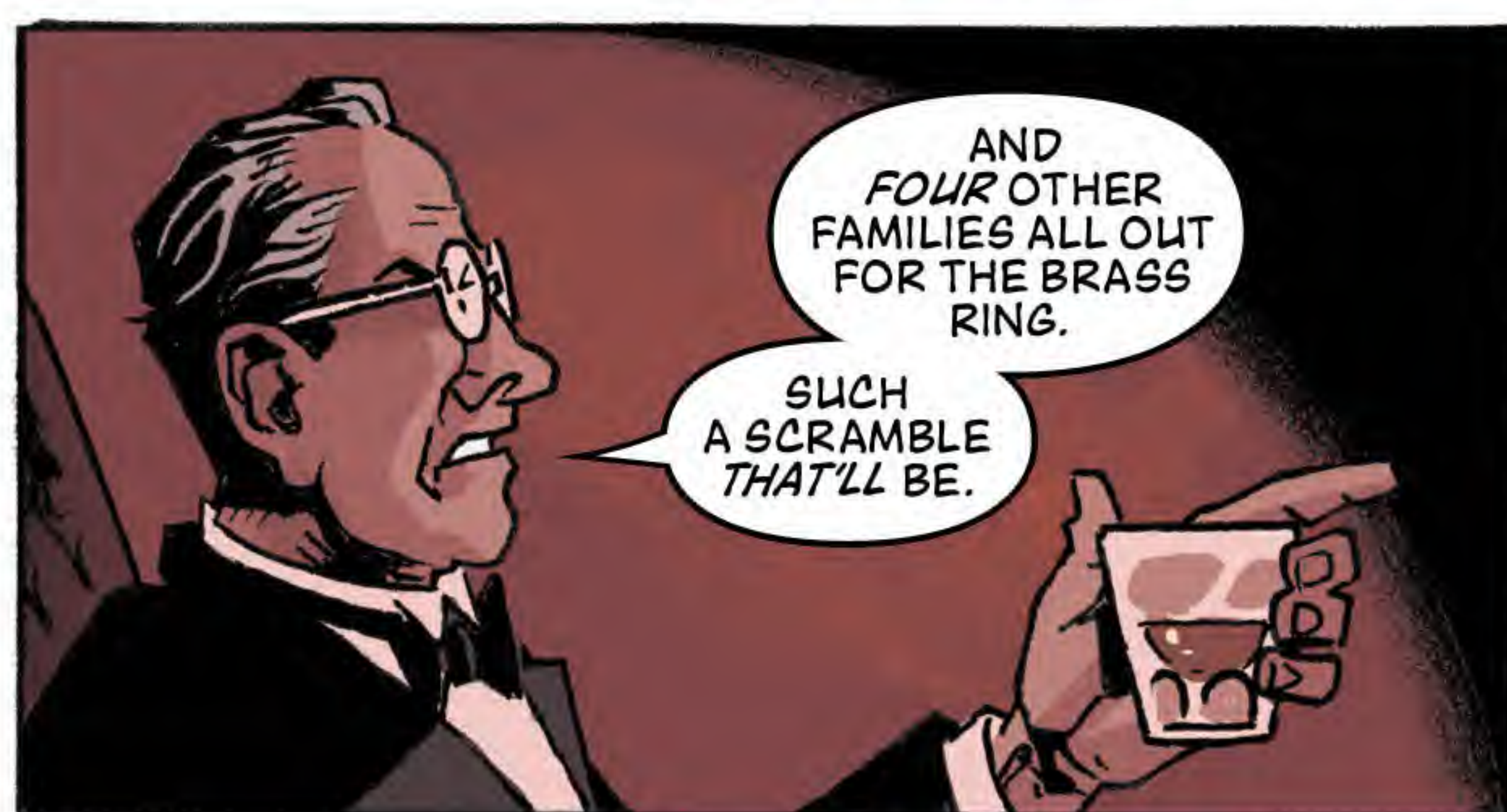
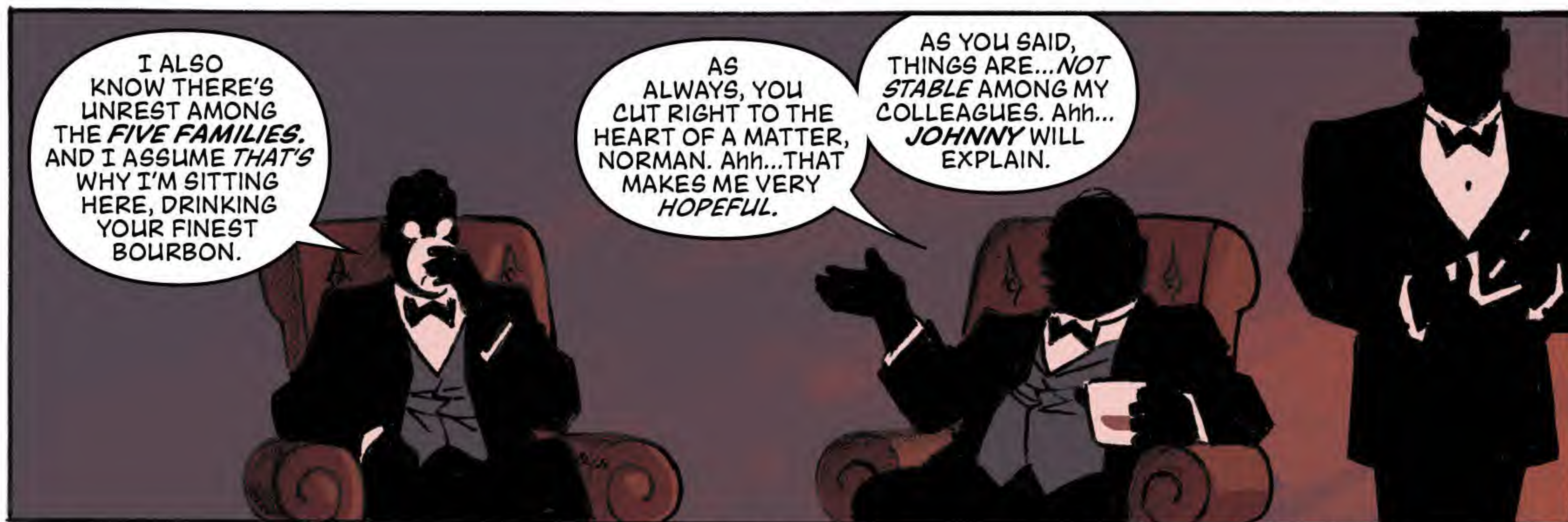


AS YOU *KNOW*, I'VE ALWAYS HELD *YOUR PEOPLE* IN HIGH REGARD. THE **RUBENSTEIN** FAMILY HAS A LONG AND LAUDABLE HISTORY IN OUR LINE OF WORK.

WELL... *WE DON'T* OPERATE AS "FAMILIES" QUITE THE SAME AS YOU ITALIANS, **LORENZO**.



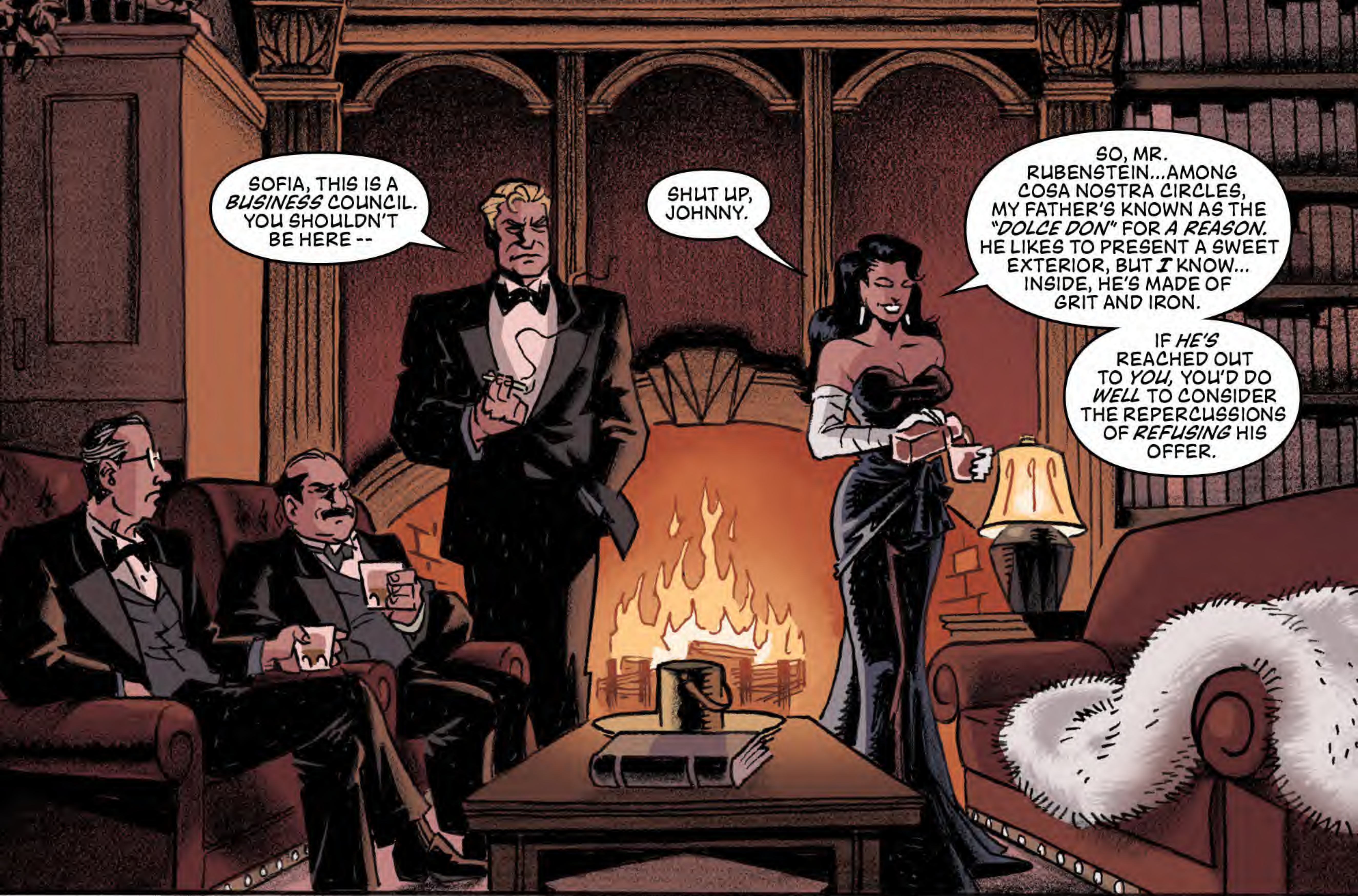
BUT I *DO KNOW* YOU VALUE MY TRUCK LINES AND MONEY-LAUNDERING OPERATIONS.





NORMAN, I'M SURE YOU REMEMBER MY DAUGHTER, *SOFA*. Ahh...SHE MAKES ME VERY PROUD!

AS YOU SEE, SHE'S ALSO -- heh... PRONE TO *SPEAKING* HER MIND.



SOFIA, THIS IS A BUSINESS COUNCIL. YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE --

SHUT UP, JOHNNY.

SO, MR. RUBENSTEIN... AMONG COSA NOSTRA CIRCLES, MY FATHER'S KNOWN AS THE "DOLCE DON" FOR A REASON. HE LIKES TO PRESENT A SWEET EXTERIOR, BUT I KNOW... INSIDE, HE'S MADE OF GRIT AND IRON.

IF HE'S REACHED OUT TO YOU, YOU'D DO WELL TO CONSIDER THE REPERCUSSIONS OF REFUSING HIS OFFER.



SO LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE, CHUM... ARE YOU IN? OR OUT?



THIS IS A QUESTION?

WHERE I LEND MY LOYALTY IS MY OWN CONCERN... AND NOT SUBJECT TO THE THREATS OF A TWENTY-YEAR-OLD GIRL!



TWENTY-THREE, THANKS.

FOR YEARS, YOU'VE ENJOYED MY FATHER'S PROTECTION AND GROWN WEALTHY FROM HIS PATRONAGE. NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO RETURN THE FAVOR.



BUT ONLY IF YOU'VE GOT **THE BALLS** TO STAND UP AND PROVE IT!



SOFIA...
THAT'S
ENOUGH!

THIS IS
YOUR IDEA
OF "HIGH
REGARD"...?

MY FRIEND,
PLEASE FORGIVE MY
DAUGHTER'S IMPERTINENCE.
SHE IS MY *ONLY* CHILD, AND IT
APPEARS THAT HER MOTHER
AND I *INDULGED* HER FAR
TOO MUCH.

I
ASSURE YOU...
YOUR SUPPORT IS
MOST IMPORTANT
TO MY CAUSE!



HMPH!

YOU
WON'T FIND *OUR*
WOMEN BARGING IN
ON *MEN'S* AFFAIRS...
AND WITH *THEIR*
HAIR SO WILD AND
IMMODEST!



I CAN'T
SPEAK FOR
JEWISH WOMEN,
I'M AFRAID...

BUT
MY HAIR
DOESN'T
LIKE TO BE
TAMED.



AND
NEITHER
DO I!



BURBANK
SPEAKING.

THIS IS
MARSLAND.

REPORT.

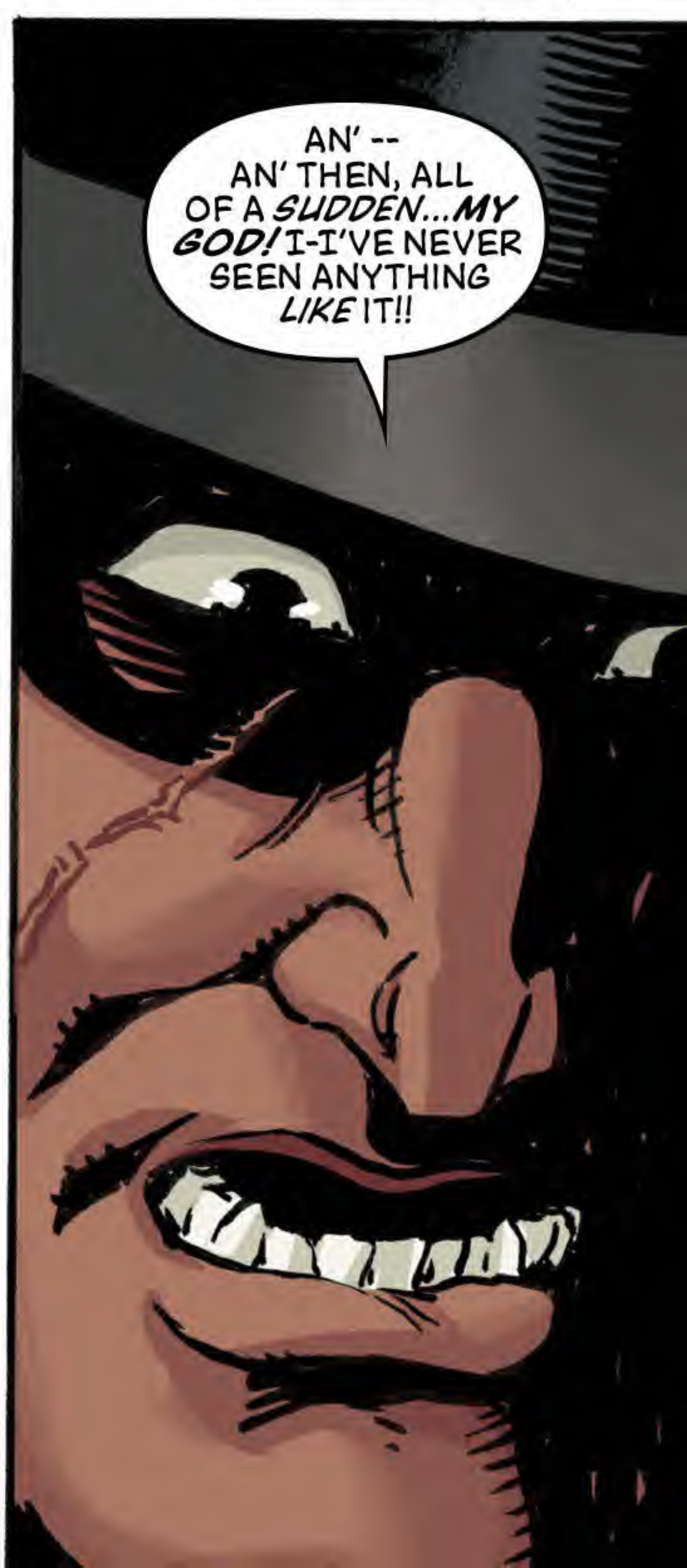
AS PER HIS
INSTRUCTIONS,
I'VE INFILTRATED
THE VALENTI
MOB.



LOOKING
TO SEE HOW THEY
MOVE AND DISTRIBUTE
THEIR HOOCH...AND
WHETHER THEY'RE
HORNING IN ON THE
OTHER FAMILIES'
TURFS.



TONIGHT...
LESS THAN AN HOUR
AGO...S-SOMETHING
REALLY **BIG** HAPPENED!
WE WERE RECEIVING A
SHIPMENT OFF ONE O'
THE DOCKS.



AN' --
AN' THEN, ALL
OF A SUDDEN...MY
GOD! I-I'VE NEVER
SEEN ANYTHING
LIKE IT!!





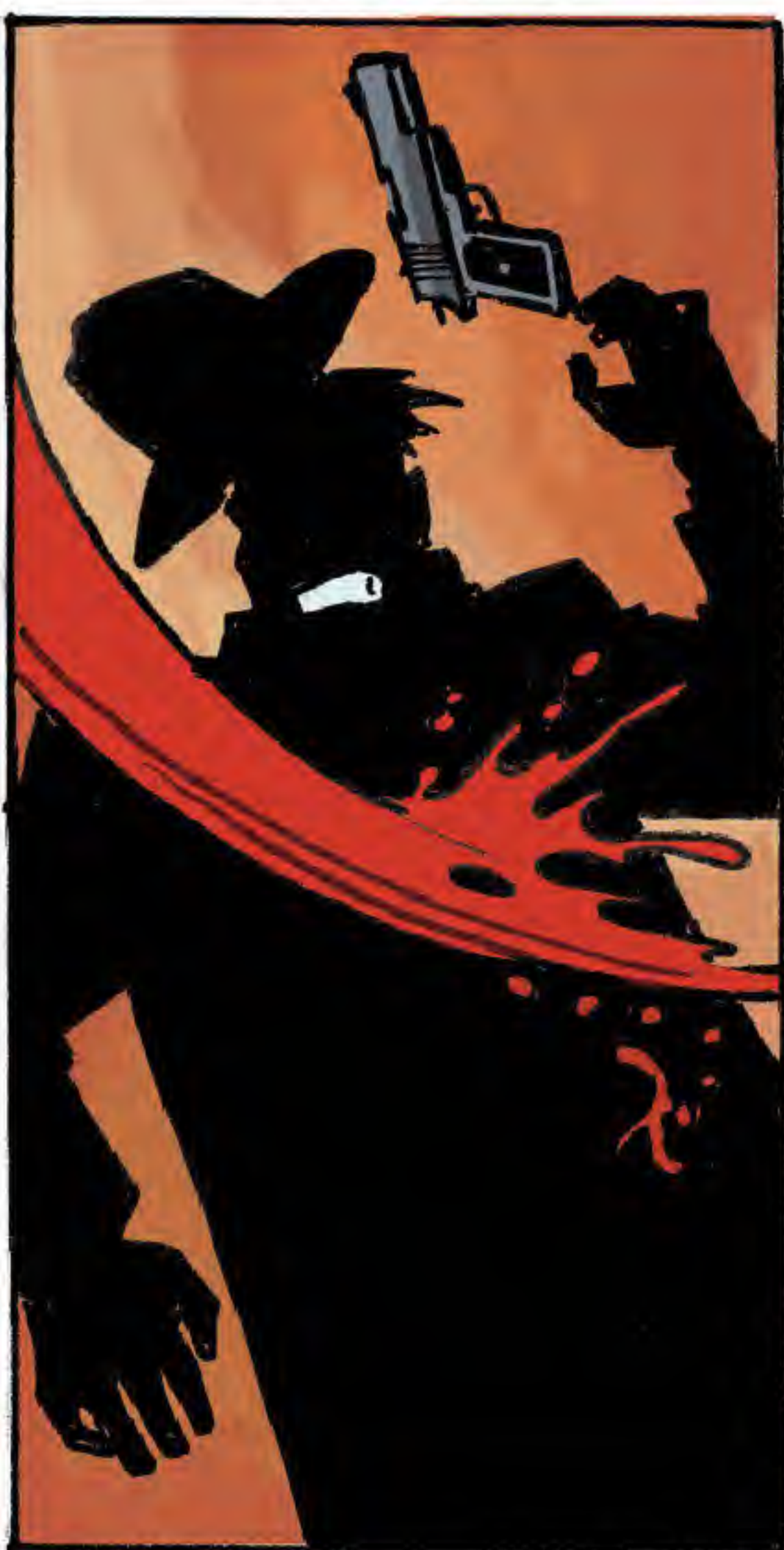
"THIS...THIS *MASKED ASSAILANT* SUDDENLY APPEARED OUT OF *NOWHERE*! DIDN'T SAY A WORD...JUST STARTED *BUTCHERING* VALENTI'S MEN.

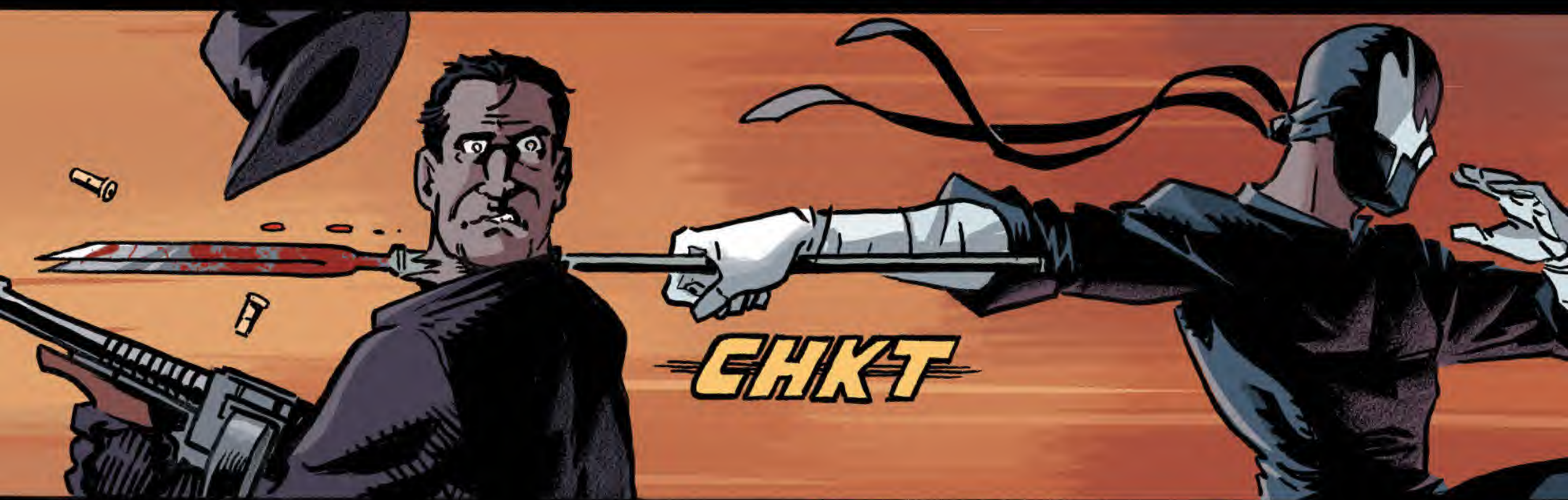


"HE WAS DRESSED ALL IN *BLACK* AN'...AN' HE CARRIED THIS LONG SWORD-SPEAR KINDA THING.

"AND, HOLY MOSES...HE WAS *FAST!* *SO FAST!*

"NEVER HESITATED FOR A SECOND!"





"IT...IT WAS ALMOST LIKE WATCHING *HIM* IN ACTION."



"LESS THAN A MINUTE...IT WAS ALL OVER."

"AFTERWARDS, THE SCENE LOOKED LIKE A CHICAGO SLAUGHTERHOUSE! HE ORDERED ONE OF THE SURVIVING DOCK MEN TO DRIVE THE TRUCK TO A SECRET LOCATION.

"TOLD THE OTHERS HE WAS CLAIMING THE HOOCH AS TRIBUTE FROM THE VALENTIS... VICTORY SPOILS FOR THE NEW BOSS IN TOWN.



"HE CALLED HIMSELF... **GRENDEL!**"



I MANAGED TO DUCK AROUND A CORNER... BARELY ESCAPED WITH MY SKIN.

I AIN'T... I AIN'T SEEN THAT KINDA SAVAGERY SINCE THE WAR! AND IT WAS SO... COLD. SO DELIBERATE.

CHRIST! MY-MY HANDS ARE STILL SHAKIN'!



REPORT NOTED.

During my years as his friend and companion...

...he's deployed me into the field many times, as a distraction, a decoy, even a detective.

Once, I never could have imagined facing such perilous situations by choice. And I often wonder what my life would've been like had I never met him.

TELEGRAM FOR YOU, MISS LANE.

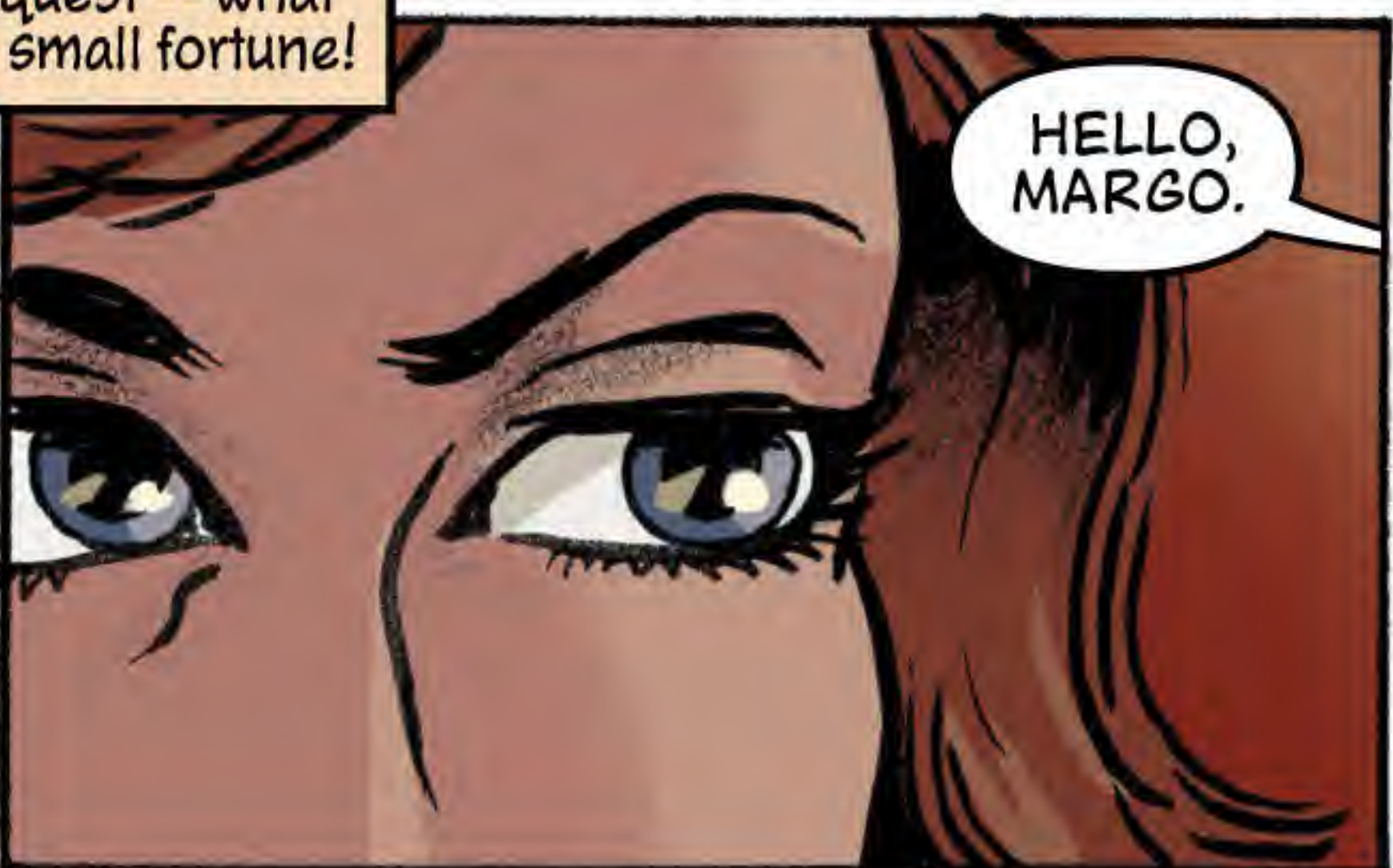
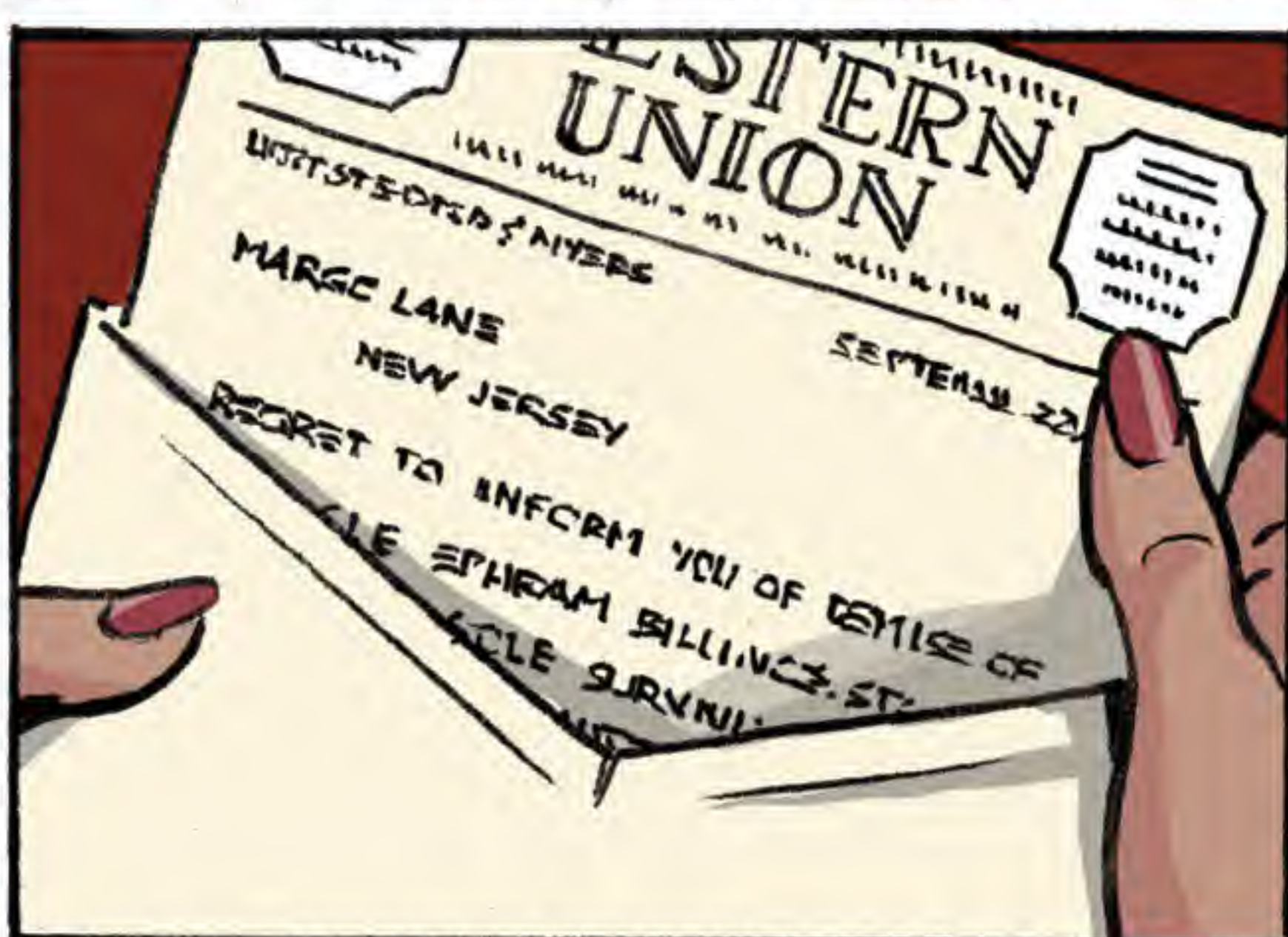
THANK YOU, RICHARDS.

It seems a great-uncle on my mother's side has passed away.

Little more than a hazy memory for me.

And yet... I am his only surviving kin, and thus heir to his final bequest -- what amounts to a small fortune!

HELLO, MARGO.





I RECEIVED URGENT NEWS LATE LAST NIGHT.

ONE OF THE OTHER AGENTS WAS WITNESS TO A MASSACRE! WROUGHT BY A MASKED VILLAIN WHO APPEARS TO BE TARGETING THE HIERARCHY OF ORGANIZED CRIME.

ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT'S HIS OBJECTIVE?

PERHAPS HE'S ANOTHER AVENGER... LIKE YOU?

Sometimes I wonder... in his undaunted quest for justice, does he truly even care that I am here at his side?



DOUBTFUL. HE APPEARS TO BE STAGING A COUP D'ÉTAT... USING THE ALIAS "GRENDL."

THE OGRE FROM THE BEOWULF SAGA?



I GATHER HE'S BETTER READ THAN OUR GARDEN-VARIETY FELON. STILL, THIS DEMANDS *THE SHADOW'S* SCRUTINY.

DON'T WAIT UP.

PHONE IF YOU NEED ME.



Does he really need me?

And... do I really need him?



"WAY I HEAR IT...
LORENZO VALENTI'S
OUT FOR BLOOD!"



THAT
SURPRISES YOU?
SOME *GEEK* IN A CIRCUS
COSTUME MAKES OFF
WITH A LOAD OF HIS
PREMIUM CORN...?

HELL, I'D
BE SEEIN' RED
AN' SPRAYIN'
LEAD!

YOU
SAID IT,
BENNY!

BOXING
SCHMELING
VS
SHARKEY



QUESTION
IS... *WHO* IS THIS
GODDAMN CLOWN?
AND WHAT'S HE
WANT?



I HEARD
HE CLAIMED TO
BE *TAKIN' OVER!* GUY
MUST HAVE *COGLIONES*
THE SIZE OF CASABA
MELONS!

I MEAN,
SERIOUSLY...



WAY
I HEAR IT...
VALENTI'S MAKIN'
HIS OWN GRAB AT
THE REINS.



YEAH...AN' I
THINK *THAT'S* WHY
THIS *CAZZO'S* CHOOSIN'
NOW TO MAKE HIS
PLAY!





THE
BUSINESS OF
CRIME ATTRACTS
WOLVES AS WELL
AS JACKALS.

IF ONE OF
LUPPINO'S CAPTAINS
WERE BEHIND THIS ATTACK
ON THE VALENTIS...WHY
WOULD HE NOT DECLARE
HIS INTENTIONS
OUTRIGHT?

YOUR
KIND WOULD
ONLY *RESPECT*
SUCH BOLD
BRUTALITY.

JAY-ZUS!

GGAH!

TH-THE
SHADOW!



WHO
IS HE?

I-I DUNNO!
LOOK, MAYBE THIS
GUY IN THE MASK IS JUST
SOME KINDA ENFORCER!
A-A HATCHET MAN!

NOBODY
KNOWS!



IF HE
IS MERELY AN
ASSASSIN, THEN
SOMEBODY MUST
BE CALLING THE
SHOTS.





SOMEBODY KNOWS.

KRAASH



KRAK



KOKOKO

ALL RIGHT,
YOU WALKING
SPOOK SHOW!

GET
OUTTA MY
BAR --





CLUB FLAMINGO

SOMEBODY
PINCH ME --
SOFIA VALENTI,
ONLY AN HOUR
LATE!



ONE
HOUR, MY DEAR
FRANNIE, IS MORE THAN
ENOUGH TIME FOR YOU
TO GET THIS JOINT UP AND
JUMPING! I WAS MERELY
LETTING YOU... WARM
THINGS UP!



~giggle~
YOU KNOW
ME TOO WELL,
DARLING!



HERE'S
TO THOSE
WHO WISH
US WELL...



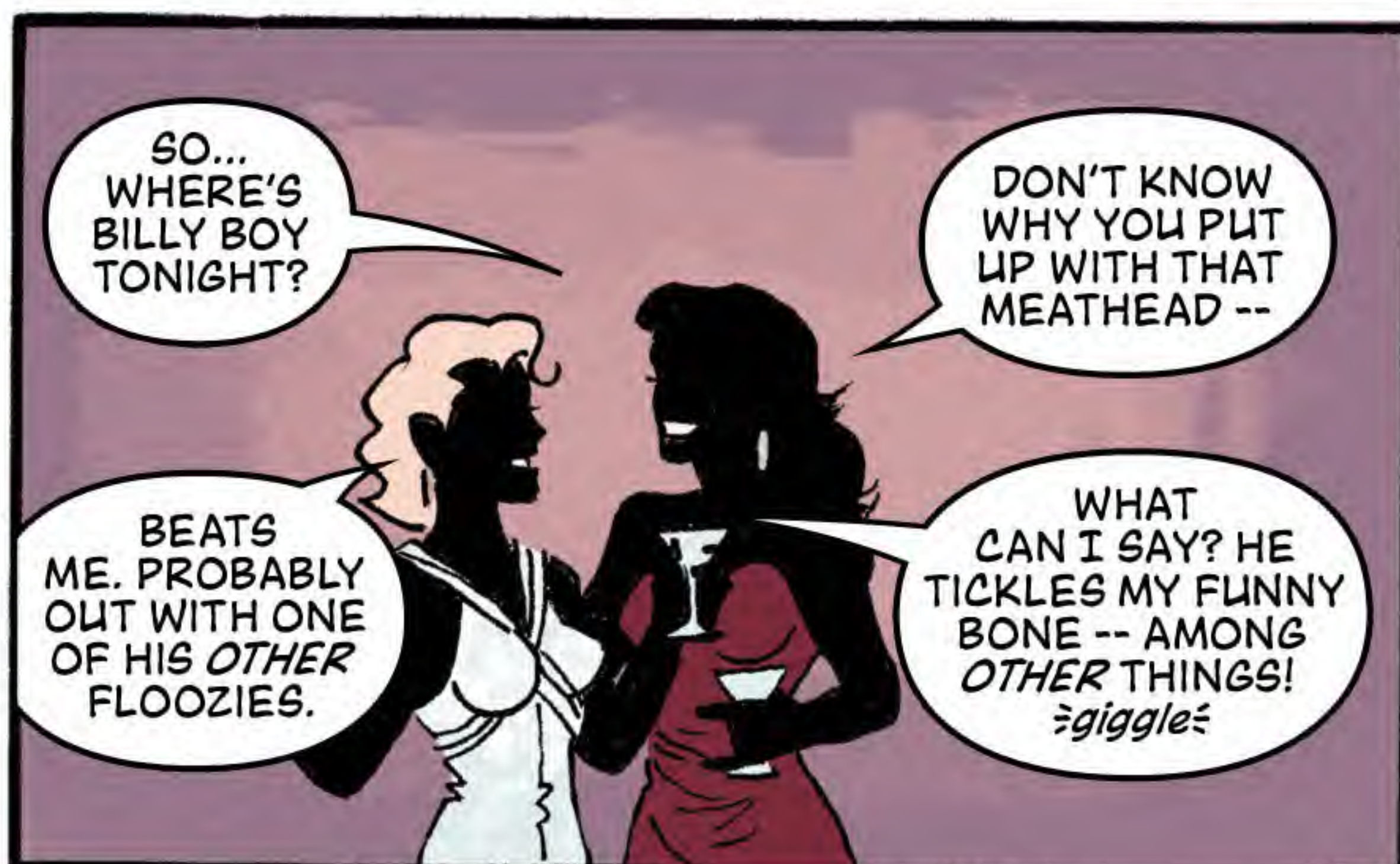
AND
THOSE WHO
DON'T CAN GO
TO HELL!

SO...
WHERE'S
BILLY BOY
TONIGHT?

BEATS
ME. PROBABLY
OUT WITH ONE
OF HIS OTHER
FLOOZIES.

DON'T KNOW
WHY YOU PUT
UP WITH THAT
MEATHEAD --

WHAT
CAN I SAY? HE
TICKLES MY FUNNY
BONE -- AMONG
OTHER THINGS!
~giggle~



SO...
WHAT'S THE
HUBBUB OVER
THERE?

SOME HOT-STUFF
YOUNG WRITER. PART
OF HIS UPCOMING NOVEL
WAS IN THIS MONTH'S *NEW
YORKER* AND *THE LITERATI*
ARE JUST GIDDY
OVER HIM!





A MAN WITH A BRAIN? THIS, I'VE GOTTA SEE!

OF COURSE **DOS PASSOS** IS A MAN OF GREAT CONVICTION BUT, AS A **WORDSMITH**, I FIND HIM ONLY TOLERABLE.

AND, NATURALLY, LIKE ANY GREAT SOCIALIST...IN TIME HE'LL TAKE A HARD TURN TO THE RIGHT. IT'S INEVITABLE...LIKE MOLD ON BLUE CHEESE!

DIDN'T I TELL YOU? HIS NOVEL'S EVEN **MORE** PROVOCATIVE! THE FINAL GALLEYS JUST WENT TO THE PRINTER.

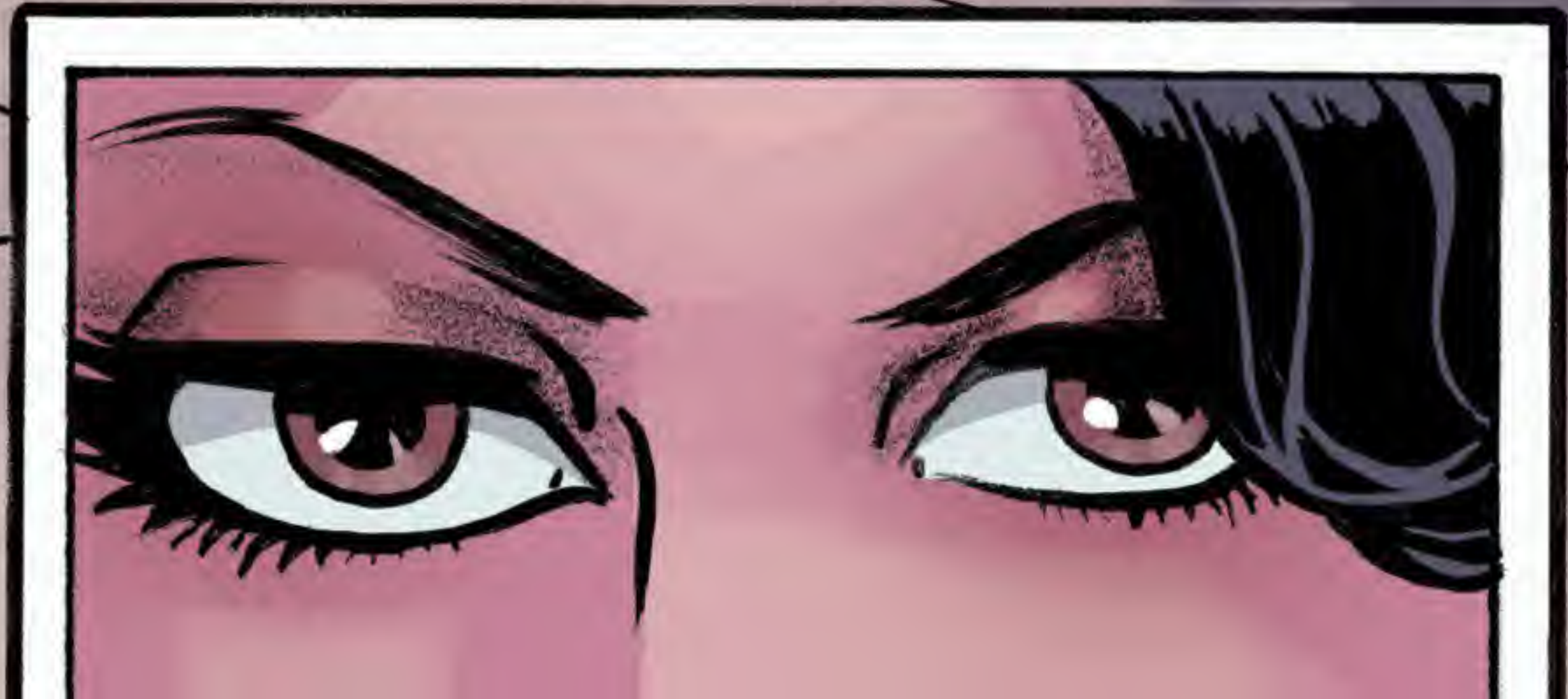


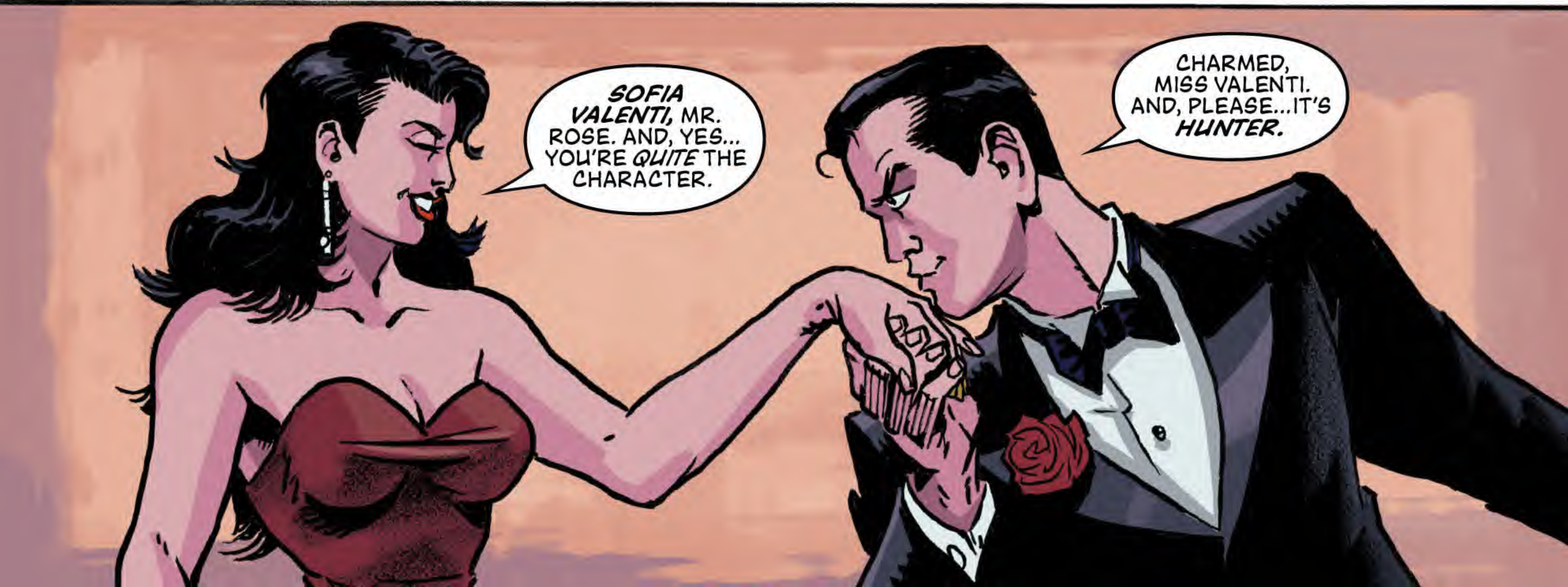
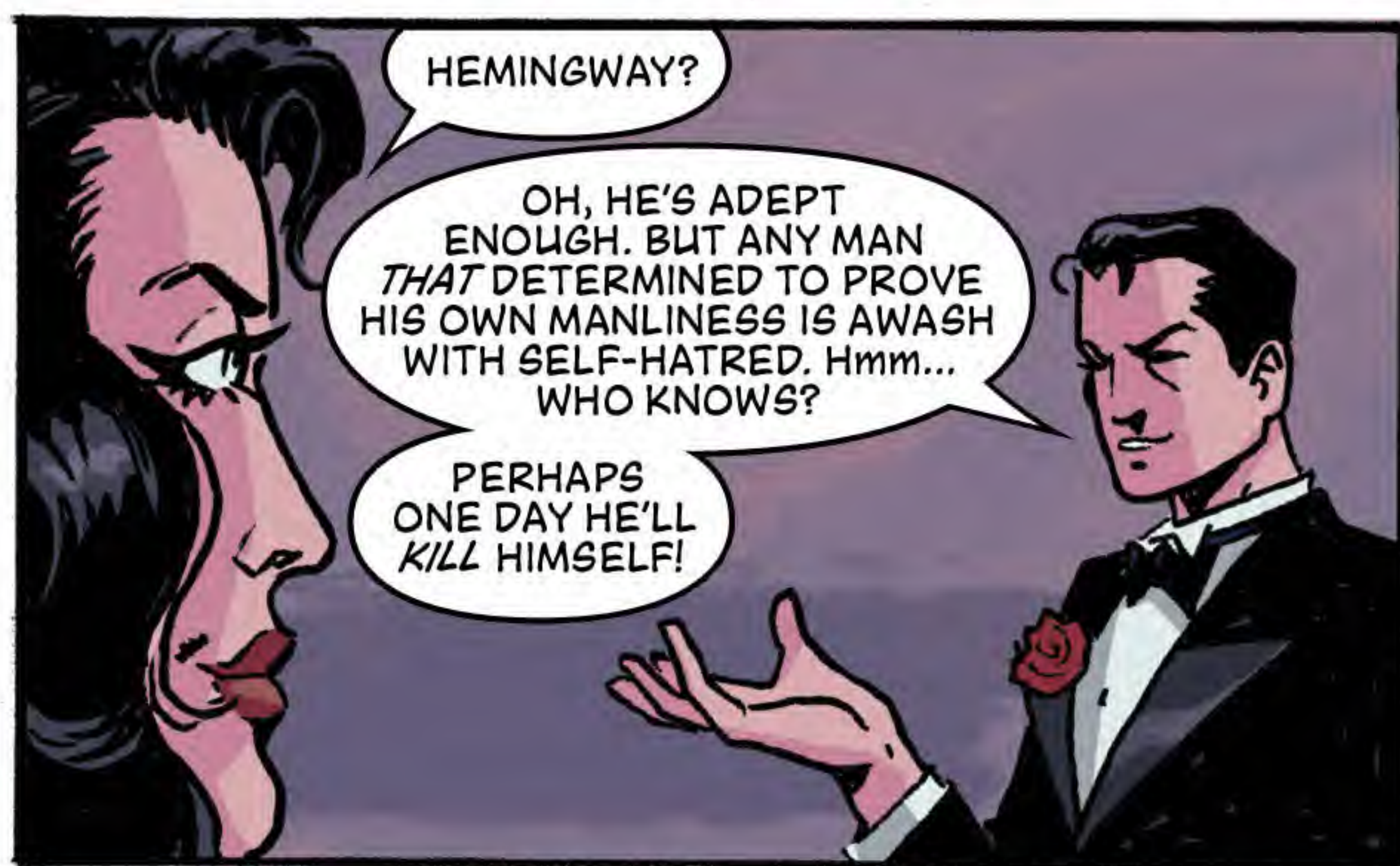
Such a joy to stride through a time of such common literacy!

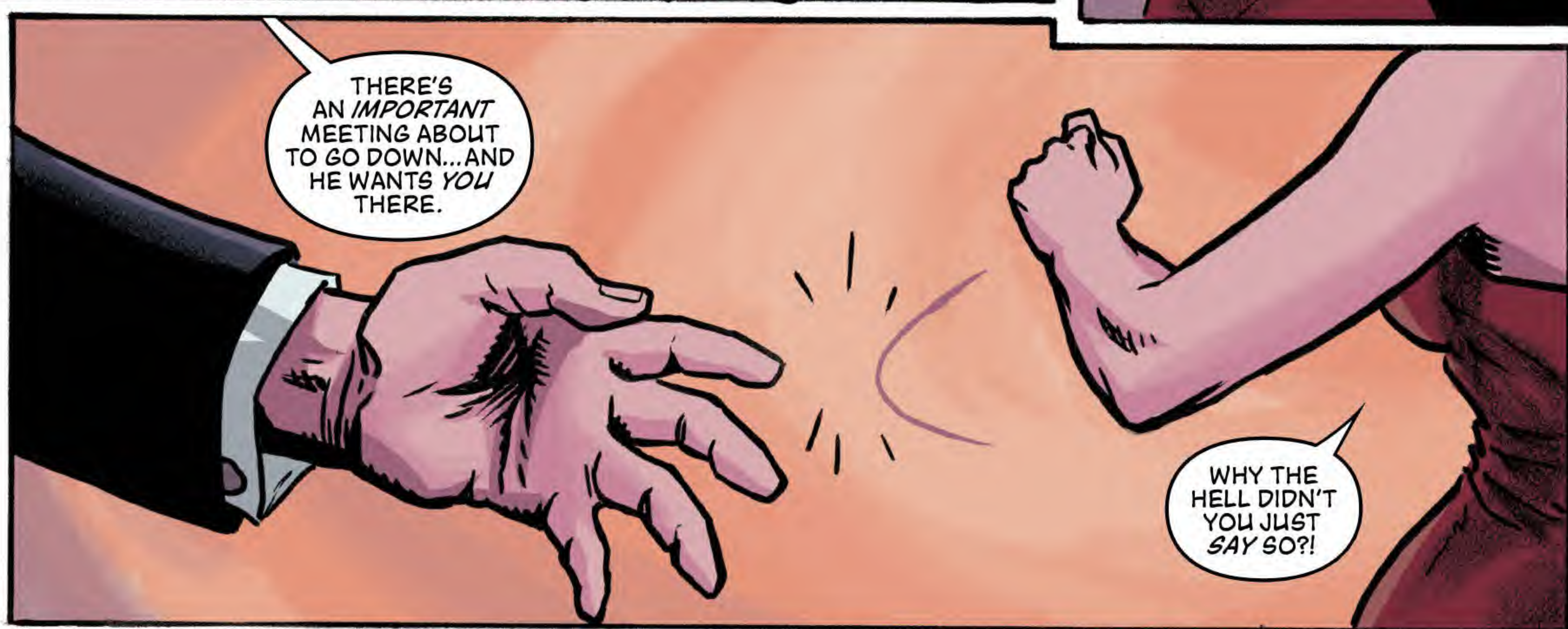
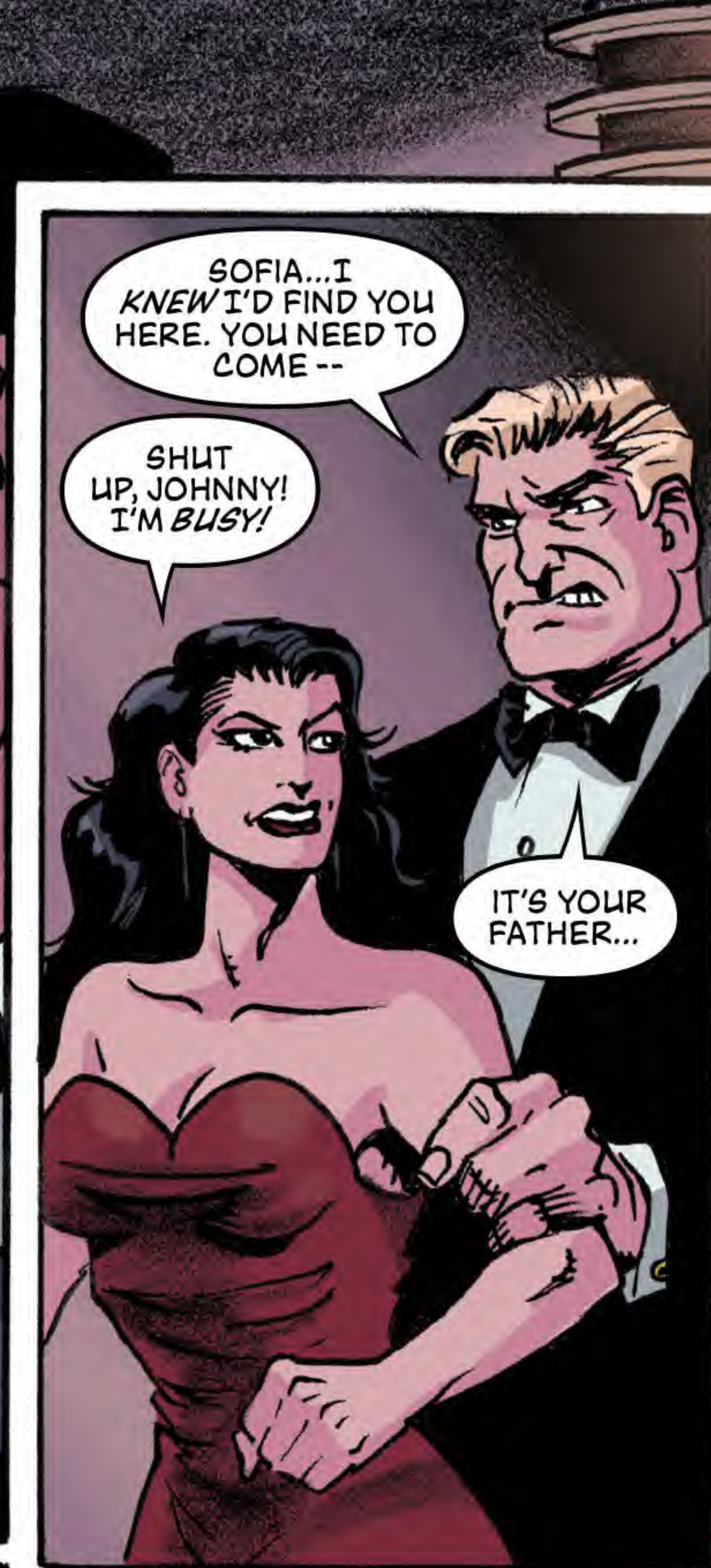
When people actually read instead of staring, dumbfounded, at glowing blue screens.

Makes me feel... right at home.

OHOO, MR. ROSE! YOU SAY THE MOST **CHALLENGING** THINGS! WHO, THEN, IN YOUR OPINION, *IS* THE GREATEST WRITER ALIVE?







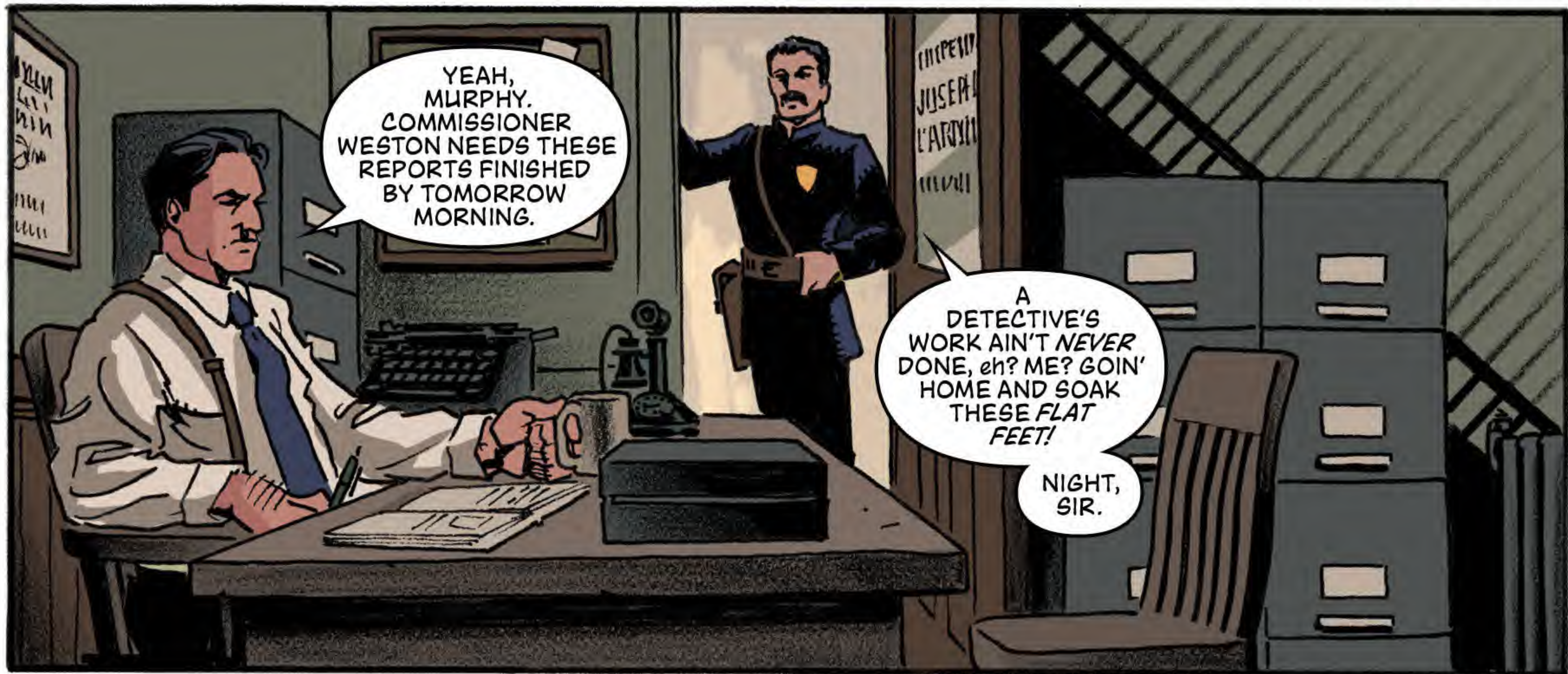


Of course, a crusade such as *his* could never be waged alone. Over the years, he's enlisted a select troop of covert operatives.

Even among the police.



BURNIN' THE MIDNIGHT OIL, INSPECTOR CARDONA?



YEAH, MURPHY. COMMISSIONER WESTON NEEDS THESE REPORTS FINISHED BY TOMORROW MORNING.

A DETECTIVE'S WORK AIN'T NEVER DONE, eh? ME? GOIN' HOME AND SOAK THESE FLAT FEET!

NIGHT, SIR.

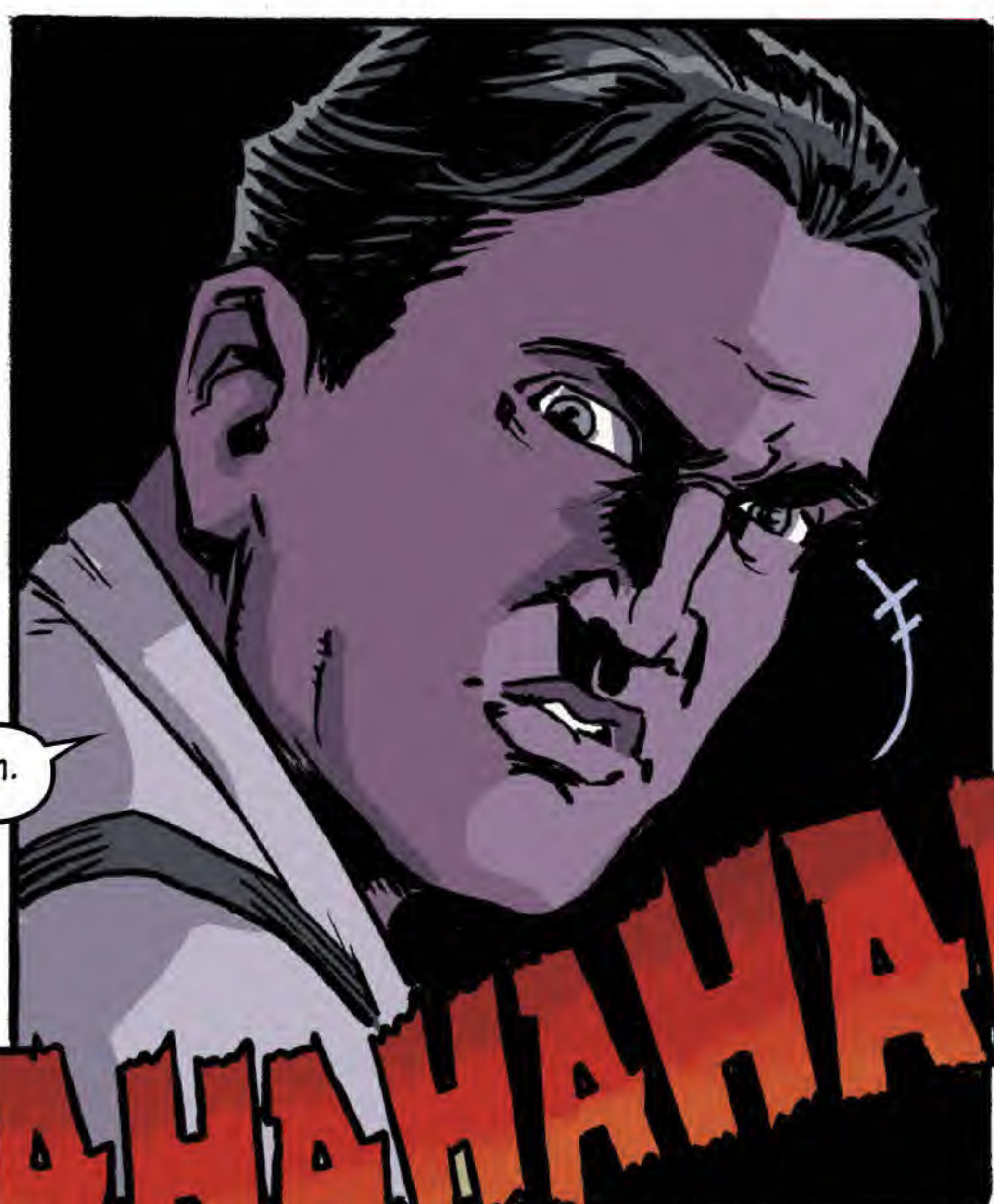


KLICK



HEY, MURPHY! WHAT'S THE DEAL? CAN'T WRITE IN THE DARK!

TURN THOSE LIGHTS BACK --



Ah.

HAHAHAHAHAHA



A WAR
IS COMING...
FOR GANGLAND
SUPREMACY.

I...
HAVEN'T
SEEN YOU IN
A WHILE.

BUT A
WILD CARD HAS
ENTERED THE FRAY -- A
MASKED KILLER KNOWN AS
GRENDEL. IT WAS HE THAT
SLAUGHTERED MEMBERS OF
THE VALENTI MOB, BENEATH
THE **BROOKLYN**
BRIDGE.

JESUS,
THAT WAS ONE
GUY?!

AND, YEAH...WE
FIGURED THERE'D
BE SOME FIREWORKS
AFTER LUPPINO
GOES.

VALENTI
WILL MAKE
A PLAY FOR
CONTROL OF THE
FIVE FAMILIES. YET
GRENDEL SEEMS
SET TO FOIL
THAT PLAN.

BE HE
ASSASSIN OR
MASTERMIND, HE
IS A *DANGER*
TO ALL.

I'LL
ISSUE AN
APB.

BOTH
THE LUPPINO
AND VALENTI
MOBS ARE UNDER
MY SURVEILLANCE.
IF **GRENDEL**
STRIKES
AGAIN...

...I
WILL FIND
HIM.



"WELL, I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED A PARK AVENUE ADDRESS, BUT... THE WALDORF ASTORIA?"



EVEN I'D SAY THAT'S A BIT OVER THE TOP!



SO WHAT'S UP, POPPY?

WHY THE URGENT SUMMONS? FRANNIE AND I WERE ALL SET TO PAINT THE TOWN RED!

HUSH, MY DARLING. REGARDLESS OF TRADITION, I CONSIDER YOU MY HEIR AND, THUS, PRIVY TO THE SERIOUS MATTERS THAT WILL BE DISCUSSED TONIGHT.



YOU SEE, I TOO HAVE BEEN SUMMONED.



BY THE MAN WHO ATTACKED OUR CARAVAN AND HIJACKED OUR GOODS.



THAT
APPROPRIATION
WAS MERELY AN
ATTENTION-GETTING
GESTURE, I ASSURE
YOU. A SHOT ACROSS
THE BOW, AS IT
WERE.

HAD
I WISHED, THE
TARGETING OF YOUR
OPERATIONS WOULD
HAVE CONTINUED TO
A DEVASTATING
DEGREE.

CONTROL
OF THIS CITY IS UP
FOR GRABS, AND YOU
WOULD PROFIT BEST TO
CAST YOUR LOYALTIES
WITH THE INEVITABLE
VICTOR...*MYSELF*.

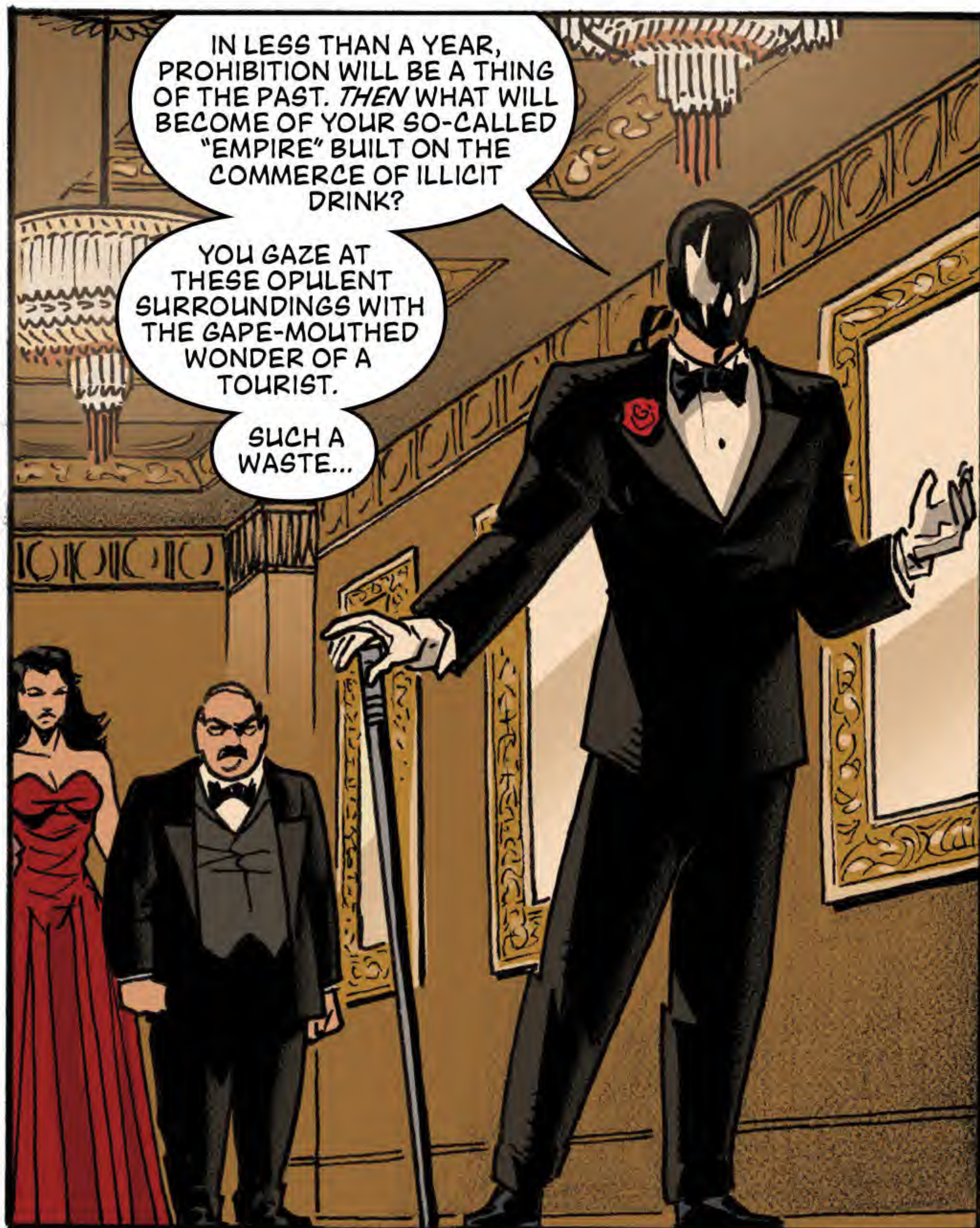
WHAT'S
THE MEANING
OF THIS? AND
JUST WHO THE
HELL ARE
YOU?!



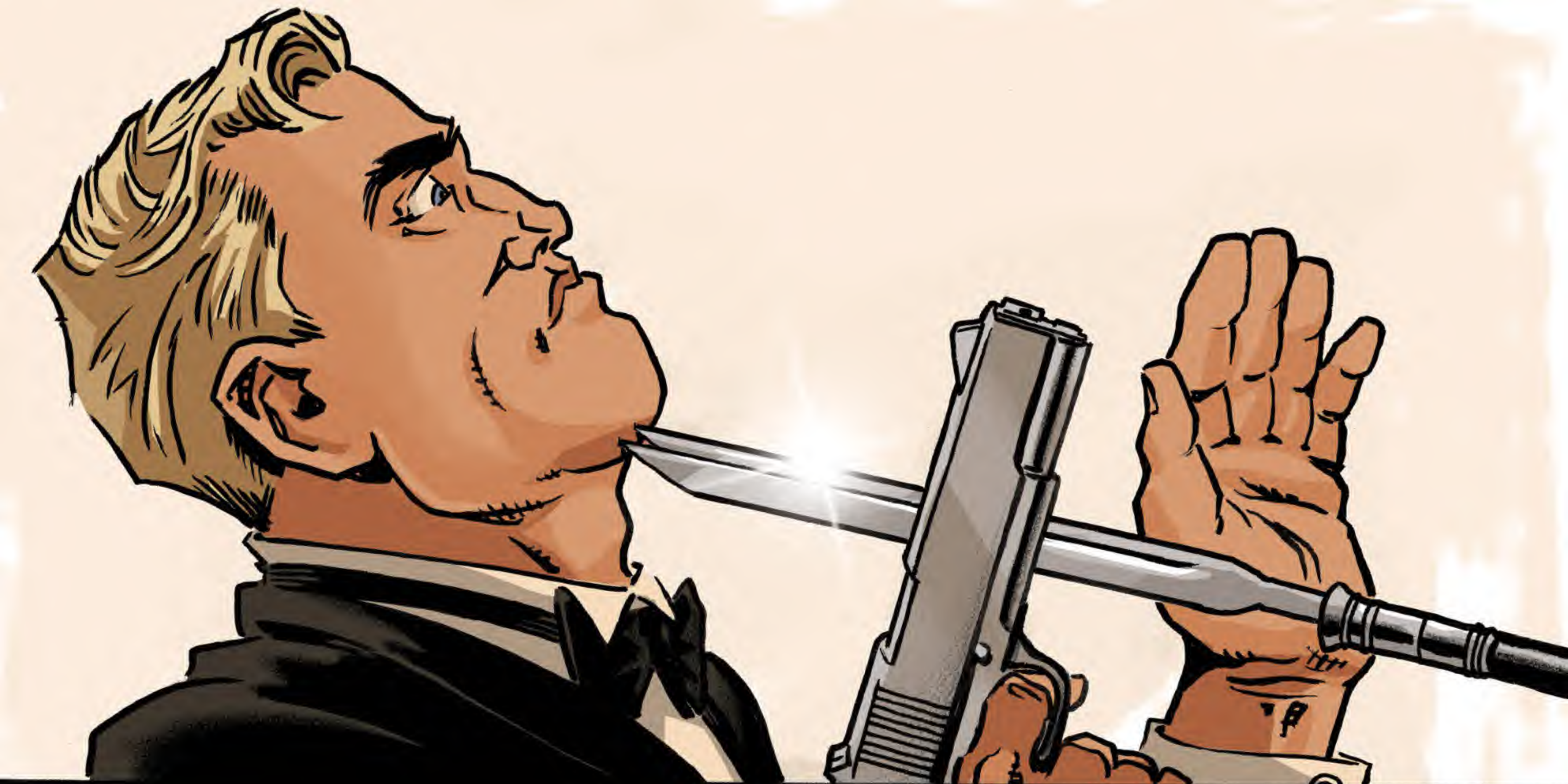
I AM
THE RAGING
WHIRLWIND THAT
WILL PURGE THE OLD
REGIMES, MISS
VALENTI.

I AM THE
INESCAPABLE
FACE OF DEATH AND
THE STUFF OF YOUR
WORST GODDAMN
NIGHTMARES.

I AM...
GRENDEL.



SHKKT



The impending demise of the big boss -- Don Carlo Luppino -- has left the hierarchy of his main lieutenants in a state of chaos.

As sides are drawn, none of the capos feel comfortable meeting on each other's turf.

And so neutral ground is chosen for this summit.

THE LUCHESE AND THE PROVENZA CREWS HAVE ALWAYS GOTTEN ALONG. THAT'S A FACT!

Right out in the open.



AN' I DON'T SEE NO REASON THAT SAME HISTORY OF **COOPERATION** CAN'T WORK IN BOTH OUR FAVORS. ONCE **DON CARLO** DRAWS HIS FINAL BREATH...

AN' WHAT ABOUT **AFTER** THAT, CARMINE? AIN'T NEVER BEEN A FAMILY WITH **TWO** BOSSES! WHAT HAPPENS **THEN**?





THE
SHADOW
KNOWS!

*Well, now. Suddenly...
this just got much
more interesting!*







DROP YOUR
WEAPON, VILLAIN! OR
FACE THE PITILESS
JUDGMENT OF...

...THE
SHADOW!

Ah...a self-styled
crusader -- a
"crime fighter."

Just not the one I
was expecting.



FOND
OF THAT
NAME, I
SEE?

WELL, SEÑOR
SOMBRA...ONLY
A LUCKY FEW CAN
REFER TO ME AS
"GRENDEL."



Amazingly fast!

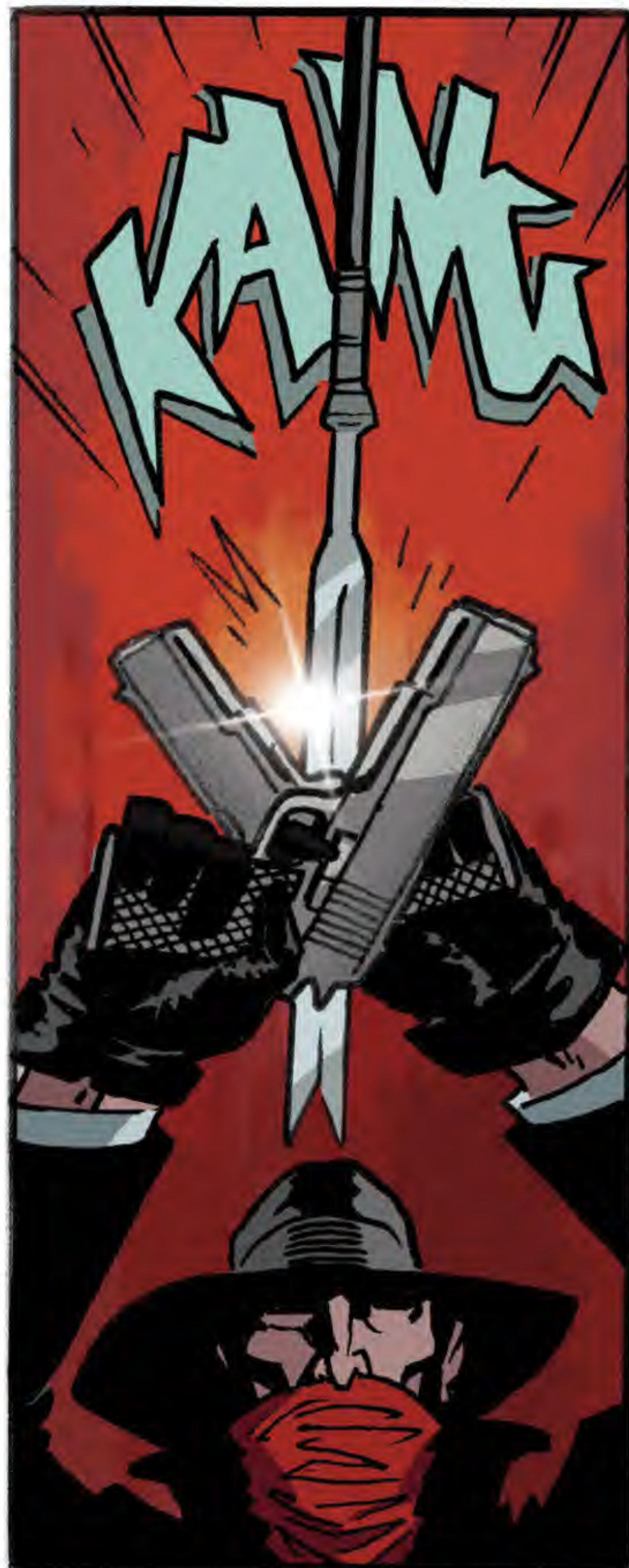
PANNIC **G G G G**



And, unlike so many armed opponents...









CLICK

CLICK

WELL
STRUCK,
MONSIEUR
OMBRE! AND
YET...

"OUR WILLS
AND OUR FATES DO SO
CONTRARY RUN, THAT
OUR DEVICES STILL ARE
OVERTHROWN!"



FOOL! MY
DEADLIEST
ARSENAL
LIES HIDDEN
DEEP...



Smoke-screen pellets.

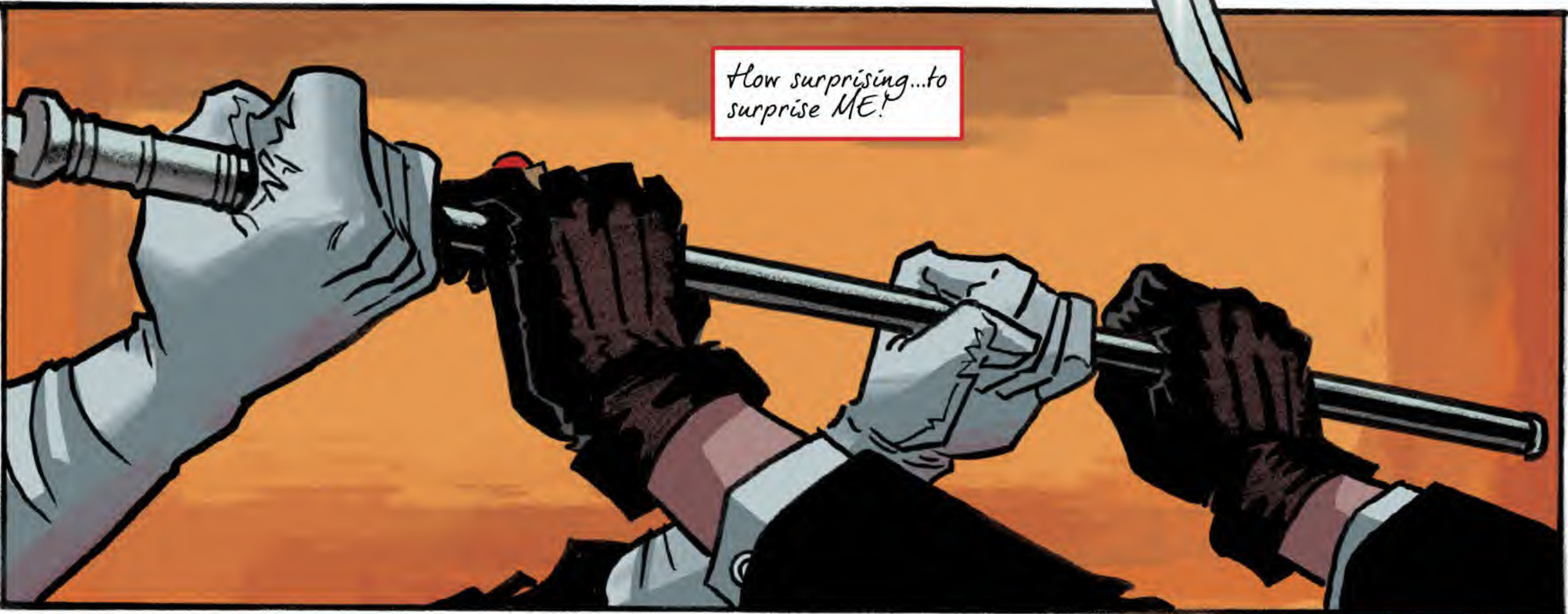
Highly advanced
for this era.

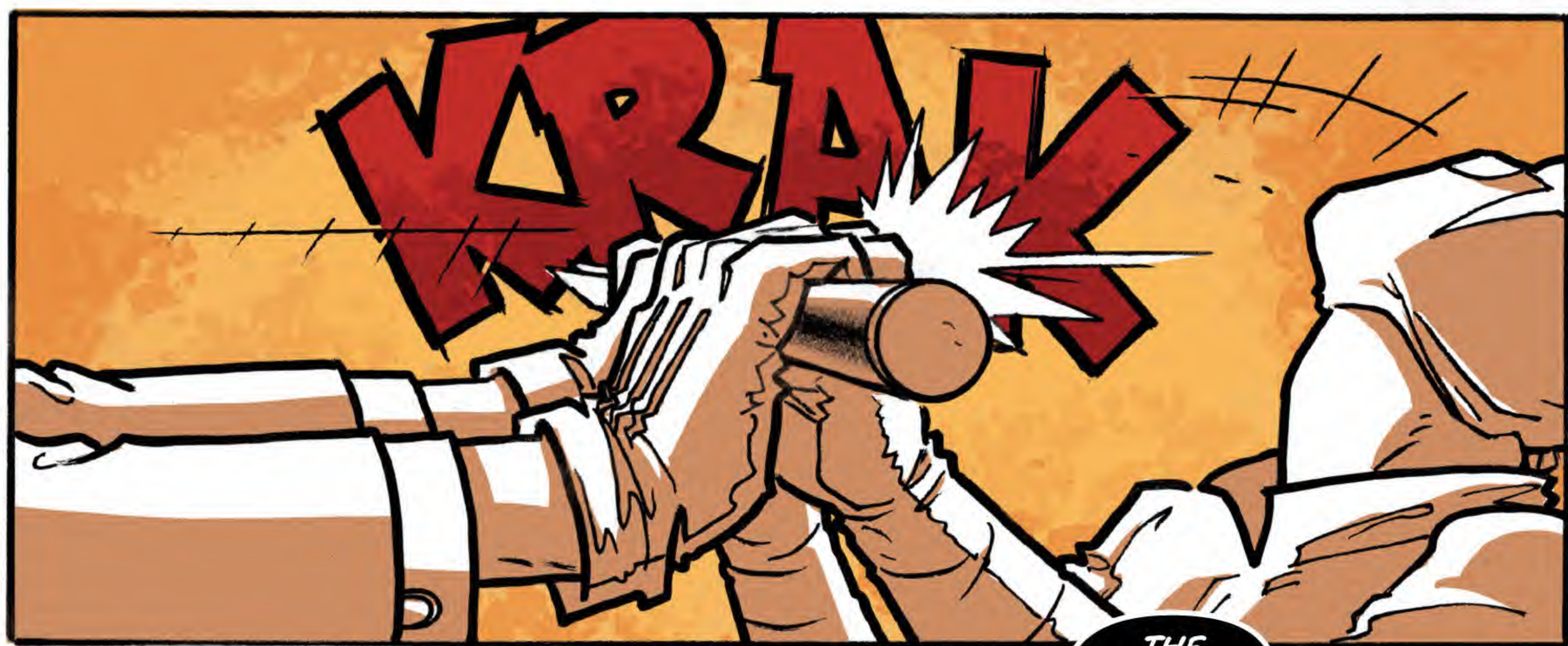
YOU
CANNOT
WIN, FEAR-
MONGER!

This is no moonlighting
cop. No embittered
victim, bent on revenge.

I SHALL
UNCOVER YOUR
MASQUERADE!

How surprising...to
surprise ME!








YOUR
FOUL VOLITION
IS ERODING!

YOUR
VIOLENCE
HAS BEEN
QUELLED!



YOU
ARE *BOUND*
BY THE FORCE
OF MY WILL!

I...

I...

I'M...

...AFRAID
NOT!

GGAH!



WNOH



HYPNOSIS,
HERR
SCHATTEN?!

PERHAPS
DULLER WITS
MIGHT SUCCUMB
TO YOUR MIND
TRICKS, BUT I
AM NO --



Struck...

...nerve clusters!

Suddenly...can't...

...move!



FOR
THE LAST
TIME...



SUBMIT
NOW...AND
SURRENDER!

OR *DIE*
ON THE POINT
OF YOUR OWN
BLADES!



Still...so groggy.

Leaden limbs.



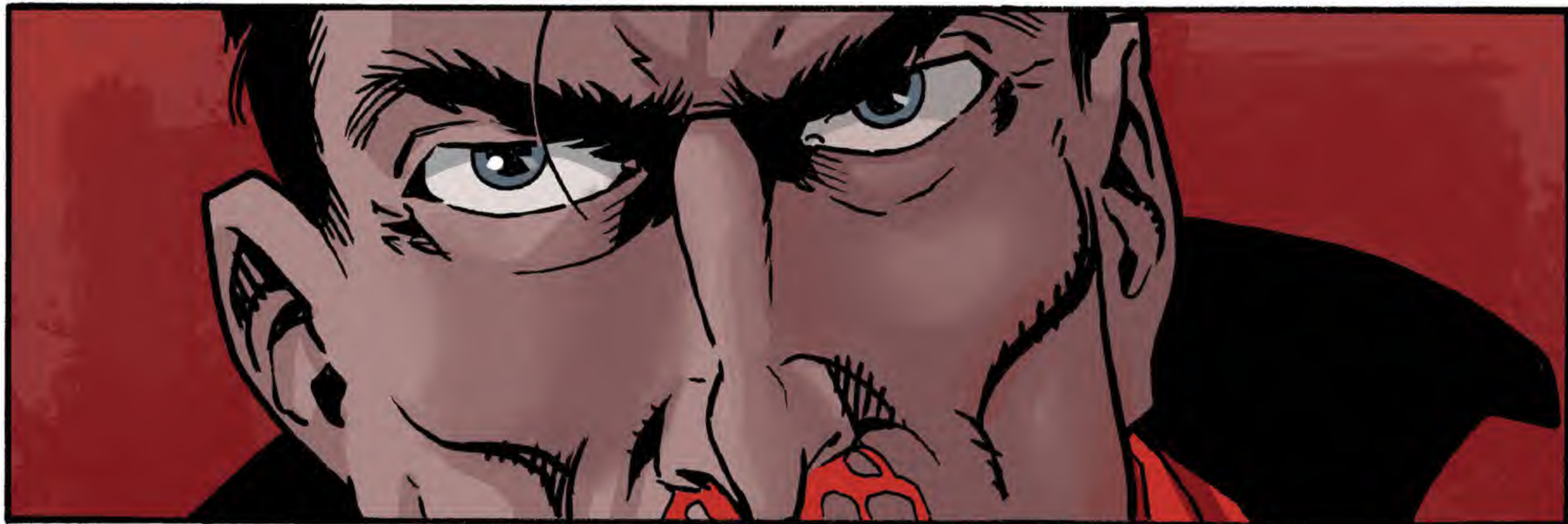
Must...escape!



*Incredible!
Against all
odds...*

*This lone vigilante...
has bested me!*

*Disarmed me!!
UnTHINKable!*



*Perhaps, here in this golden
age of the past, I've found
a truly worthy adversary.*

At last!

"HE FIRST APPEARED
SEVERAL YEARS AGO...
DURING THE *LAST* WAR FOR
CONTROL OF THE MOBS.

"AND HE'S BEEN A ROYAL
PAIN IN THE ASS EVER
SINCE! NO ONE KNOWS
WHO HE IS OR *WHERE*
HE COMES FROM."

THEY
CALL HIM "*THE
SHADOW.*"

YES...I
GOT THE
NAME.

HAS HE
EVER TARGETED
VALENTI BUSINESS
BEFORE?

SMUGGLERS,
RACKETEERS, HEIST
ARTISTS, HIT MEN...HE
SETS HIS SIGHTS ON ANY
CROOKED ENTERPRISE.
WE'VE ALL FELT THE
STING!

BUT YOU'RE
THE *FIRST* I EVER
HEARD OF WHO
TANGLED WITH HIM
AND DIDN'T WIND
UP BEHIND BARS
OR DEAD!

*At this point in history,
Argent was still operating
near the Canadian border.*



AN IMPRESSIVE FEAT, TO SAY THE LEAST.

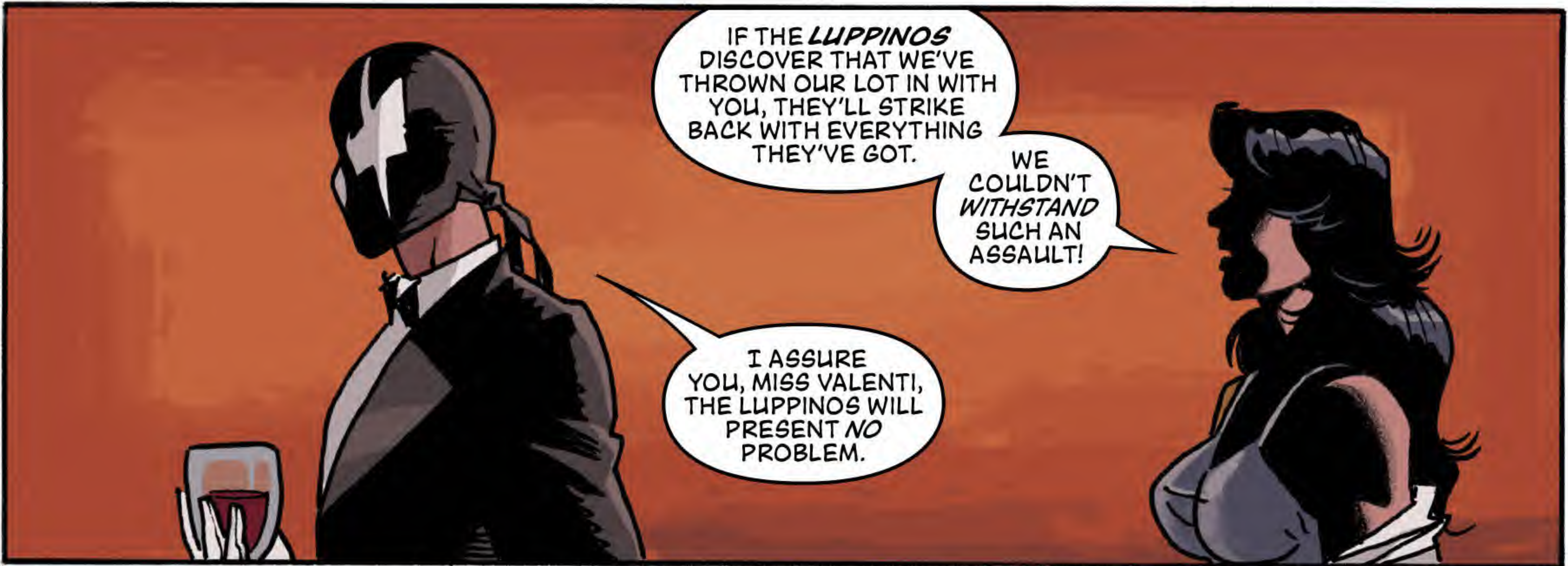
I'VE SEEN REAL *TOUGH GUYS* WHOSE HANDS START TO SHAKE AT THE MERE MENTION OF HIS NAME!

BUT, REGARDLESS OF THE BLOW YOU STRUCK, THIS *STILL* LEAVES THE MATTER OF *SUCCESSION* UNRESOLVED.



Thus, I was unprepared to deal with such a singular foe.

Such a delightful conundrum.



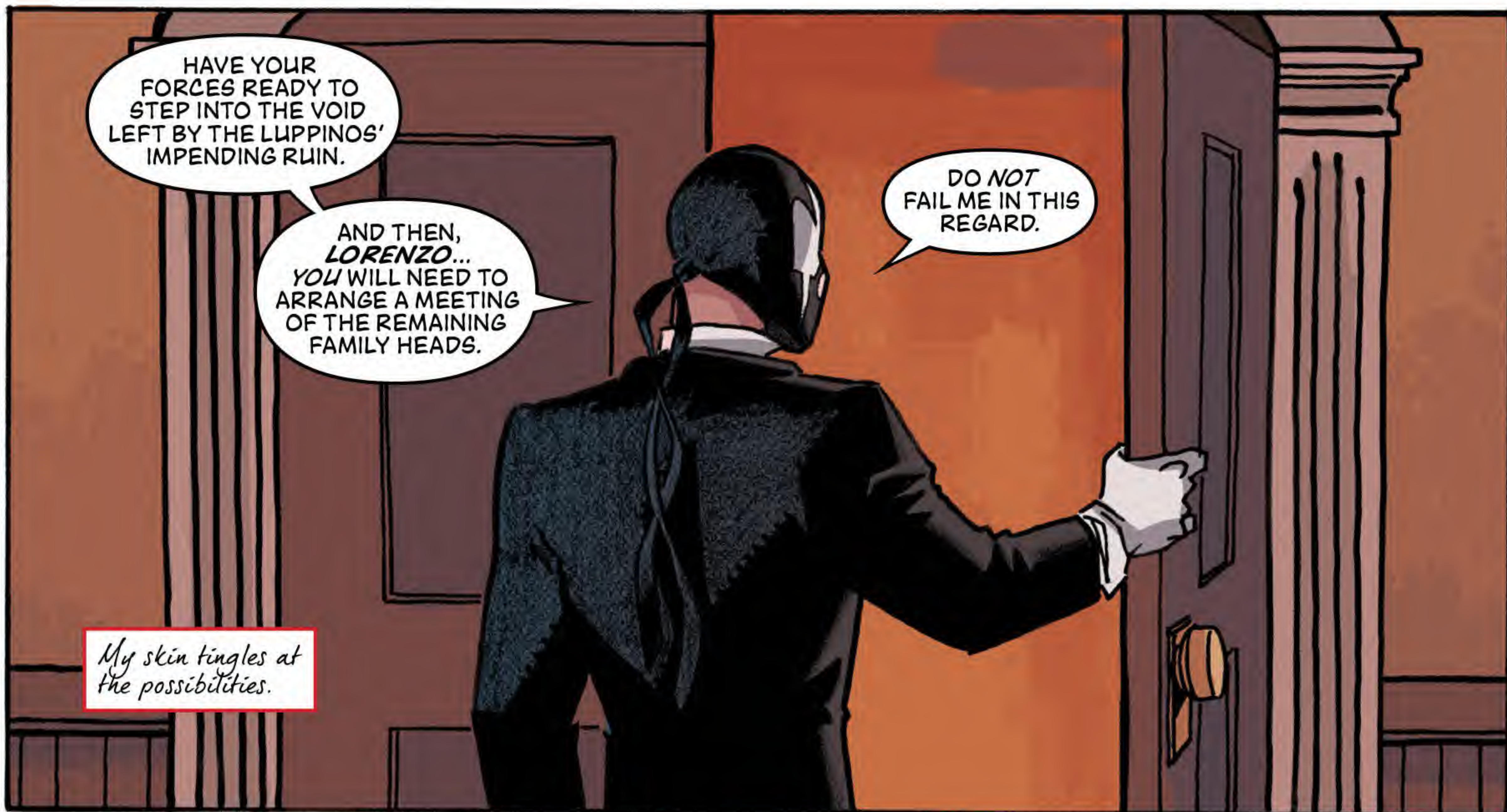
IF THE *LUPPINOS* DISCOVER THAT WE'VE THROWN OUR LOT IN WITH YOU, THEY'LL STRIKE BACK WITH EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT.

WE COULDN'T WITHSTAND SUCH AN ASSAULT!

I ASSURE YOU, MISS VALENTI, THE LUPPINOS WILL PRESENT NO PROBLEM.



AND THOSE SAME *"TOUGH GUYS"* WILL WHIMPER LIKE BABIES...AT THE MENTION OF *MY* NAME!



HAVE YOUR FORCES READY TO STEP INTO THE VOID LEFT BY THE LUPPINOS' IMPENDING RUIN.

AND THEN, **LORENZO**... YOU WILL NEED TO ARRANGE A MEETING OF THE REMAINING FAMILY HEADS.

DO NOT FAIL ME IN THIS REGARD.

My skin tingles at the possibilities.



STUGOTS ON THAT GUY!

POPPY... YOU OKAY?

I... DON'T KNOW.



I SPENT MY LIFE BUILDING AN EMPIRE. TO PROTECT MY FAMILY AND PROVIDE FOR MY PEOPLE IN A LAND THAT ONCE SEEMED STRANGE.



AND NOW... I MUST BOW AND SCRAPE TO A MAN WHOSE FACE I HAVE NEVER SEEN!

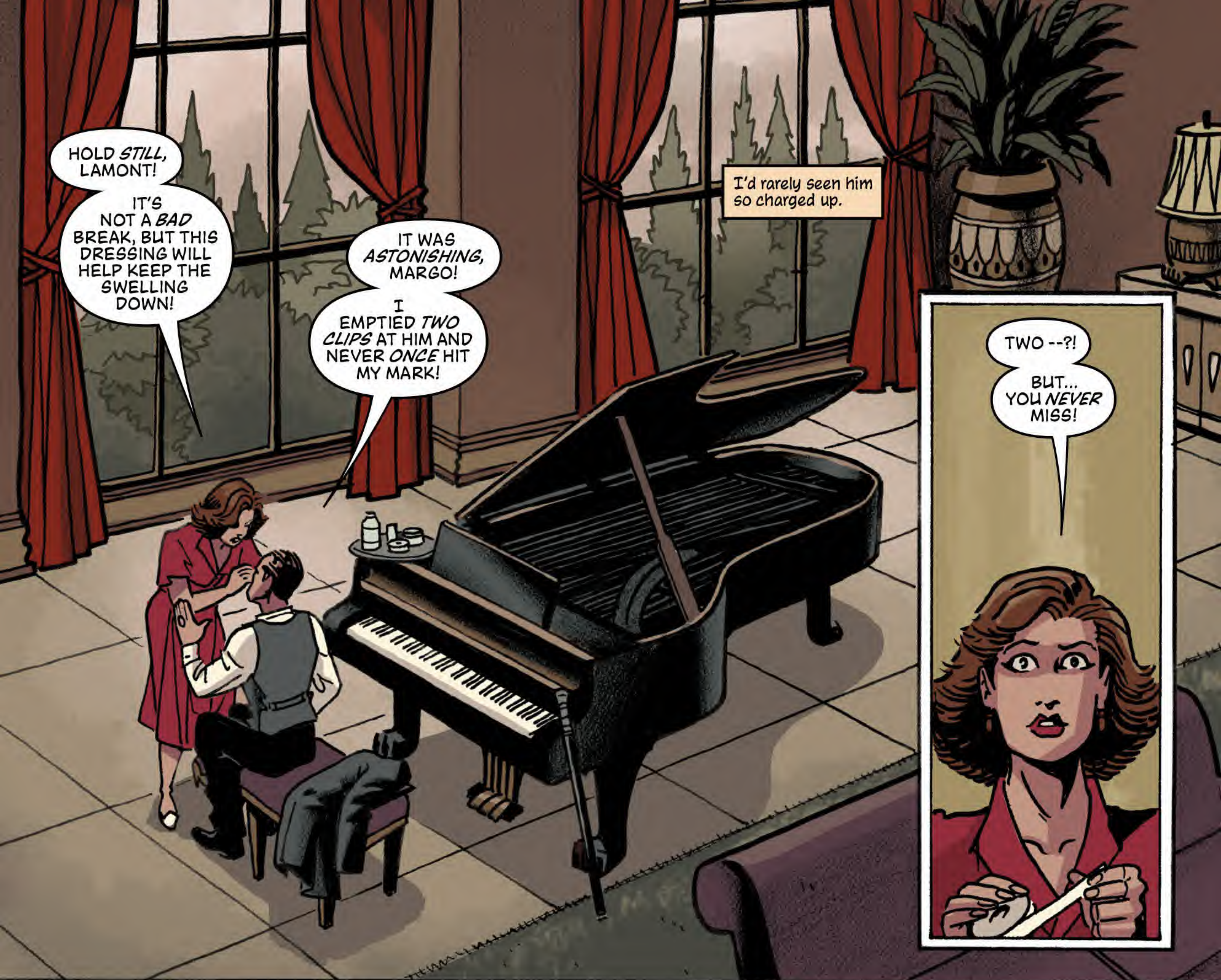
Ahh, IT MAKES ME FEEL... DIMINISHED.



MUST BE HARD ON THE OLD GUY...

sigh

SHUT UP, JOHNNY.



HOLD *STILL*,
LAMONT!

IT'S
NOT A *BAD*
BREAK, BUT THIS
DRESSING WILL
HELP KEEP THE
SWELLING
DOWN!

IT WAS
ASTONISHING,
MARGO!

I
EMPTIED *TWO*
CLIPS AT HIM AND
NEVER *ONCE* HIT
MY MARK!

I'd rarely seen him
so charged up.

TWO --?!

BUT...
YOU *NEVER*
MISS!



INDEED!

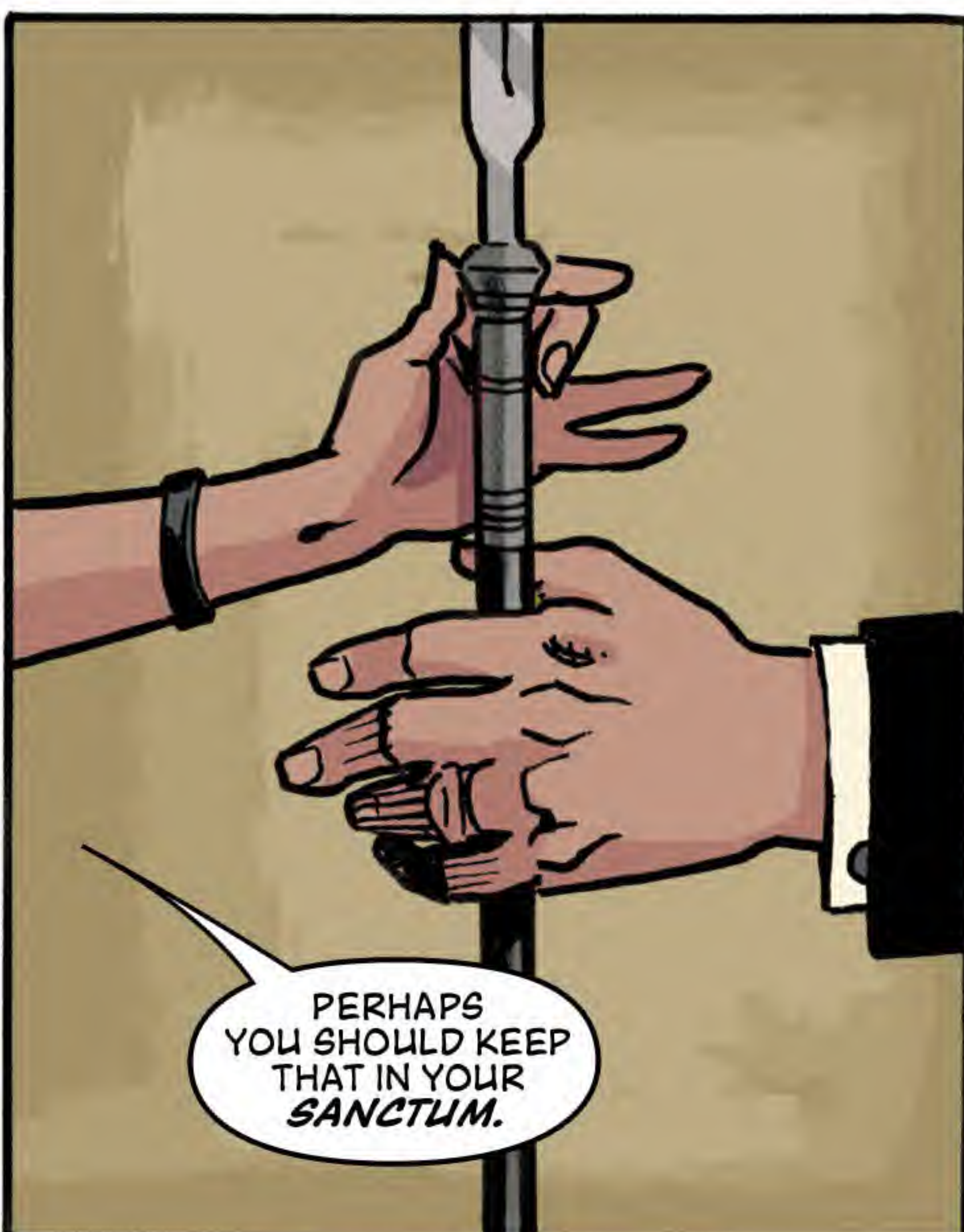
Of course, he was
always intently focused
while on the hunt.

WHICH
MAKES HIS
SPEED AND AGILITY
ALL THE MORE
REMARKABLE!



STILL...
THERE WAS A
CHAOTIC ELEMENT
ABOUT HIS ACTIONS.
AS IF HE'D HAD
NO FORMAL
TRAINING.

But *this* seemed far
more...ferocious!





"FRANNIE, DARLING...
NOW WHO'S THE ONE
RUNNING LATE?!"



AND,
SISTER...I
NEED A DRINK!
OR FOUR...



GOOD
LORD,
YOU WOULD
NOT BELIEVE
THE WEEK
I'VE BEEN
HAVING!

BUT...
YOU'RE STILL
IN A DRESSING
GOWN!

C'MOON...
GET READY!
WE'RE GONNA
PAINT THE TOWN
RED! AND GREEN!
AND PURPLE!



SORRY,
SOF...I-I'M
AFRAID I CAN'T
JOIN YOU
TONIGHT.

WHAT?!
WHY? WHAT'S
WRONG?



≡GASP!≡

WELL...I
GUESS YOU COULD
SAY I'M NOT VERY...
PRESENTABLE.



BILLY
SANTINI...
YOU SON OF
A BITCH!

YOU
GODDAMN
SONUVABITCH!



SOF,
DON'T...

WHY DO
YOU PUT UP WITH
THAT PALOOKA?!
WHY, IF ANY MAN
EVER LAID A HAND
ON ME --!

BUT, I'M
NOT YOU,
SOF!



MY
FATHER'S NOT
WEALTHY AND
POWERFUL!

I'M
ALL ON MY OWN
HERE, AND BILLY...
WHEN HE'S NOT
SOUSED...H-HE'S
NICE!

GENTLE,
EVEN...



≡sob≡
AW, SOF...
H-HE'S ALL
I GOT!

Shh...
THAT'S NOT
TRUE, HONEY.
YOU'VE GOT
ME!



Control of the mobs -- and therefore *Grendel's* linchpin -- hinged on the faltering health of the so-called "Boss of Bosses," Carlo Luppino.

His brownstone was an urban fortress.

And *should* have had guards posted at every entrance.







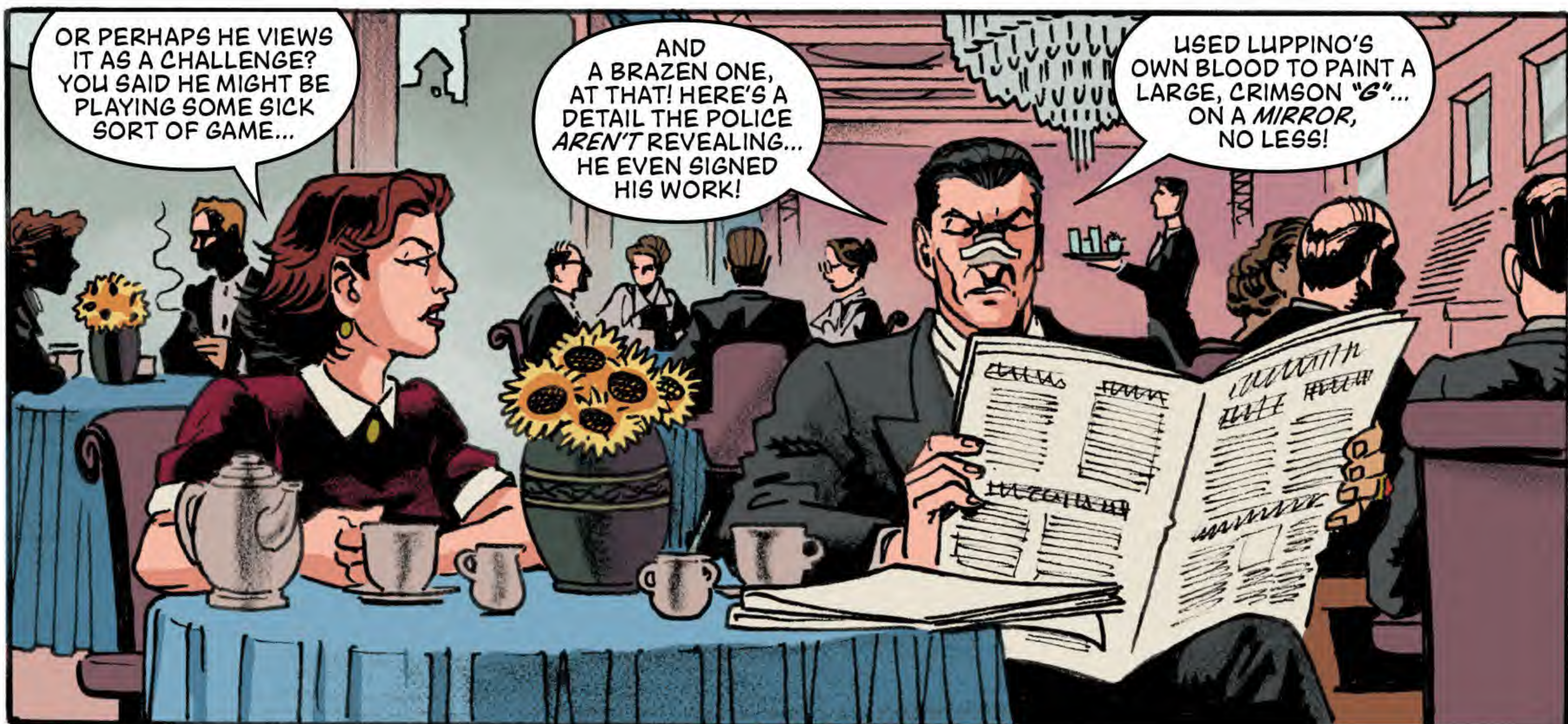
EXTRY!
EXTRY! MOB LAND
MASSACRE!

CARLO
LUPPINO AND
HENCHMEN FOUND
MURDERED!



IT'S AS I FEARED, MARGO. IN ONE FELL
STRIKE, HE'S SEVERED THE VERY HEAD
OF ORGANIZED CRIME -- LEAVING
THE PATH OPEN FOR HIS OWN
DECLARED ASCENSION!

HE TOOK
DOWN A ROOMFUL
OF ARMED MEN WIELDING
ONLY A HUNTING KNIFE!
SEEMS TO HAVE SOME
ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT
TO BLADED
WEAPONS...

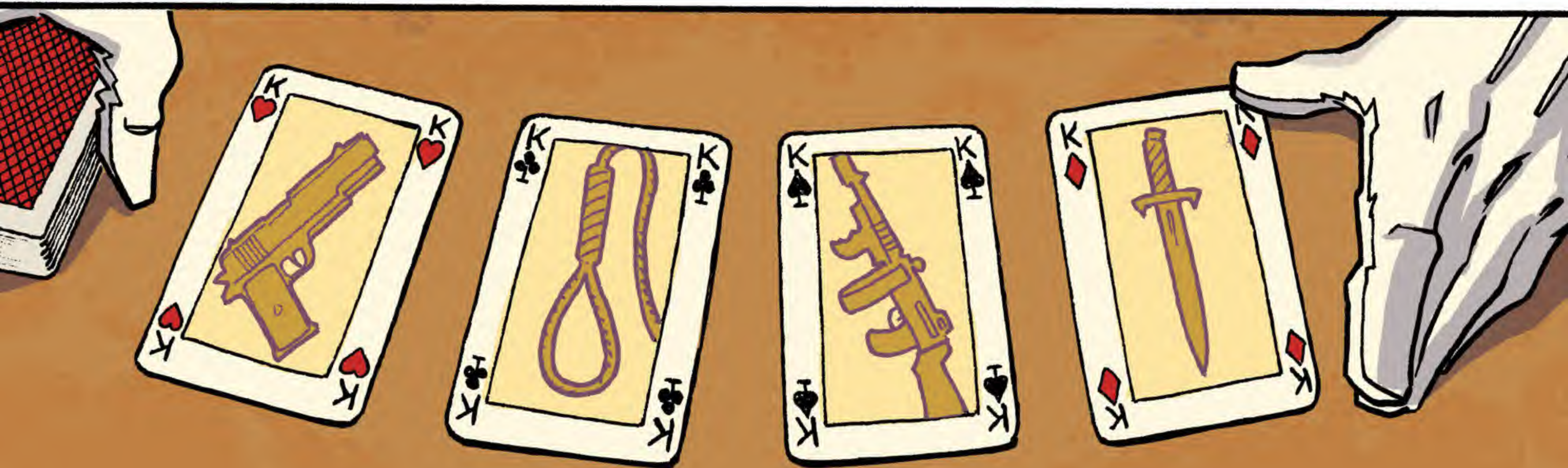
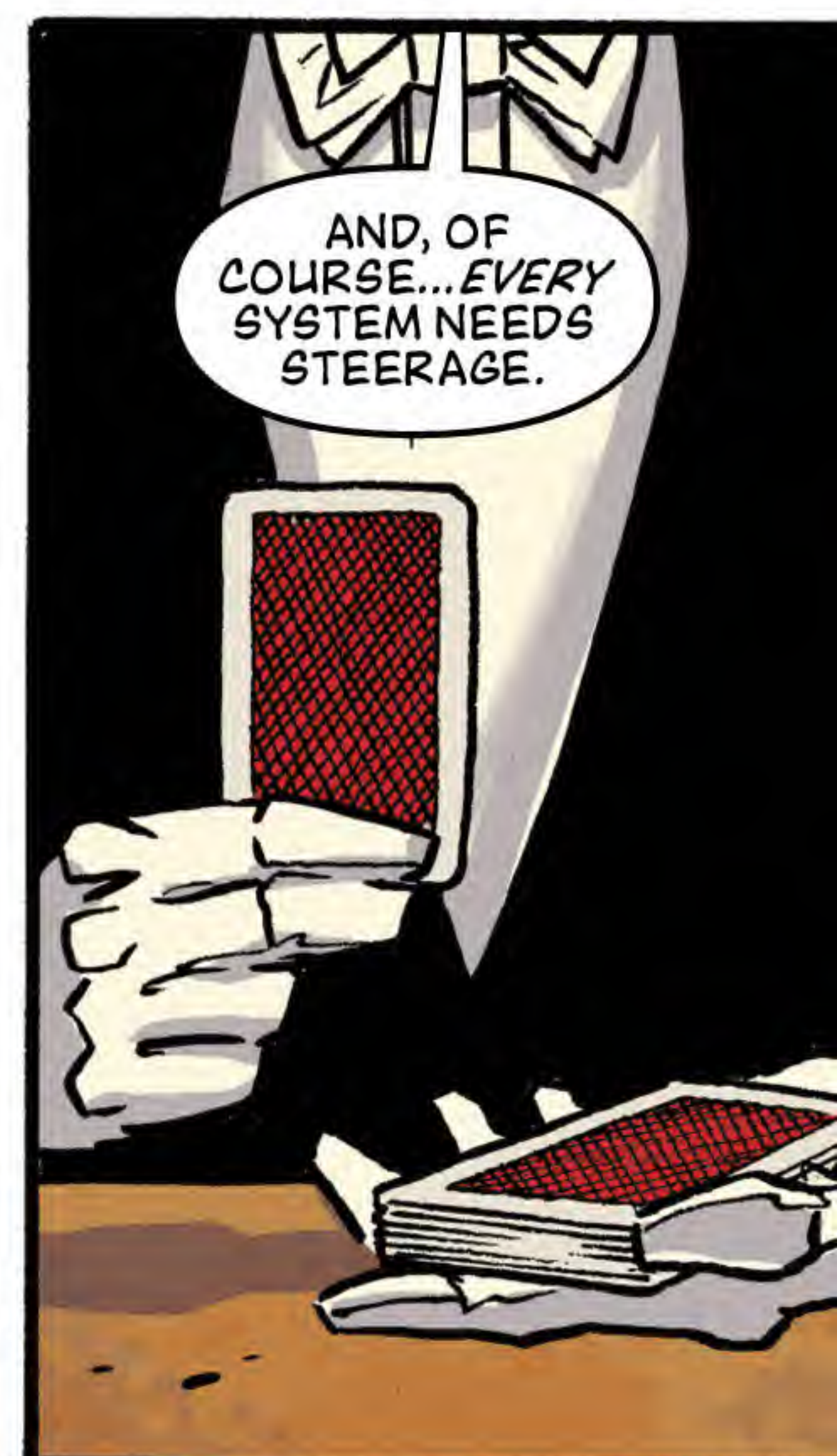
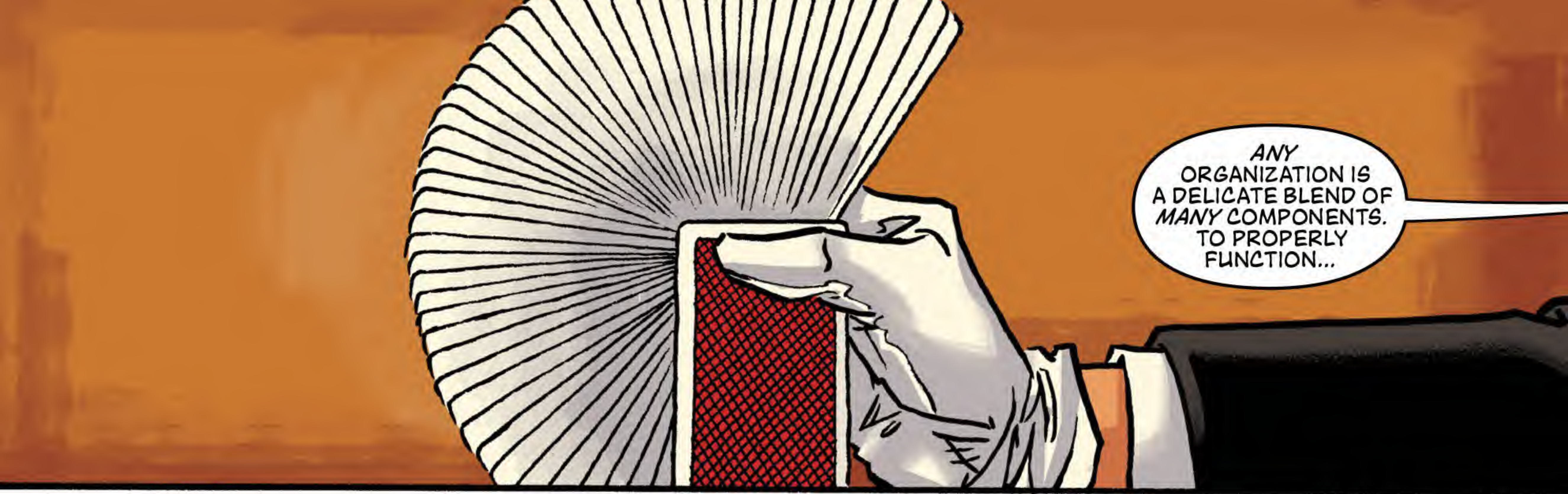


OR PERHAPS HE VIEWS
IT AS A CHALLENGE?
YOU SAID HE MIGHT BE
PLAYING SOME SICK
SORT OF GAME...

AND
A BRAZEN ONE,
AT THAT! HERE'S A
DETAIL THE POLICE
AREN'T REVEALING...
HE EVEN SIGNED
HIS WORK!

USED LUPPINO'S
OWN BLOOD TO PAINT A
LARGE, CRIMSON "G"...
ON A MIRROR,
NO LESS!







IN A MECHANISM OF *THIS* SIZE AND COMPLEXITY, THERE ARE *FOUR* REGIMES THAT OPERATE IN TANDEM -- AND THUS... *FOUR KINGS OF CRIME!*



BUT ONLY *ONE ACE* THAT TRUMPS THEM ALL!



SO THEN, GENTLEMEN...AS I HAVE FULLY OUTLINED, YOUR FORTUNES WILL RISE EXPONENTIALLY UNDER THE AUSPICES OF MY AUTHORITY.

YOUR UNQUESTIONING LOYALTY IS ALL THAT IS DEMANDED IN RETURN.

BUT NOW...I OPEN THE TABLE FOR DISCUSSION!

I'LL SPEAK!



THIS COUNCIL WAS ORIGINALLY FIVE FAMILIES, NOT FOUR! WE ALL KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO DON CARLO...HE WAS CUT DOWN BY A COWARD IN THE NIGHT!

WE BUILT THIS SYNDICATE WITH OUR OWN BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS.

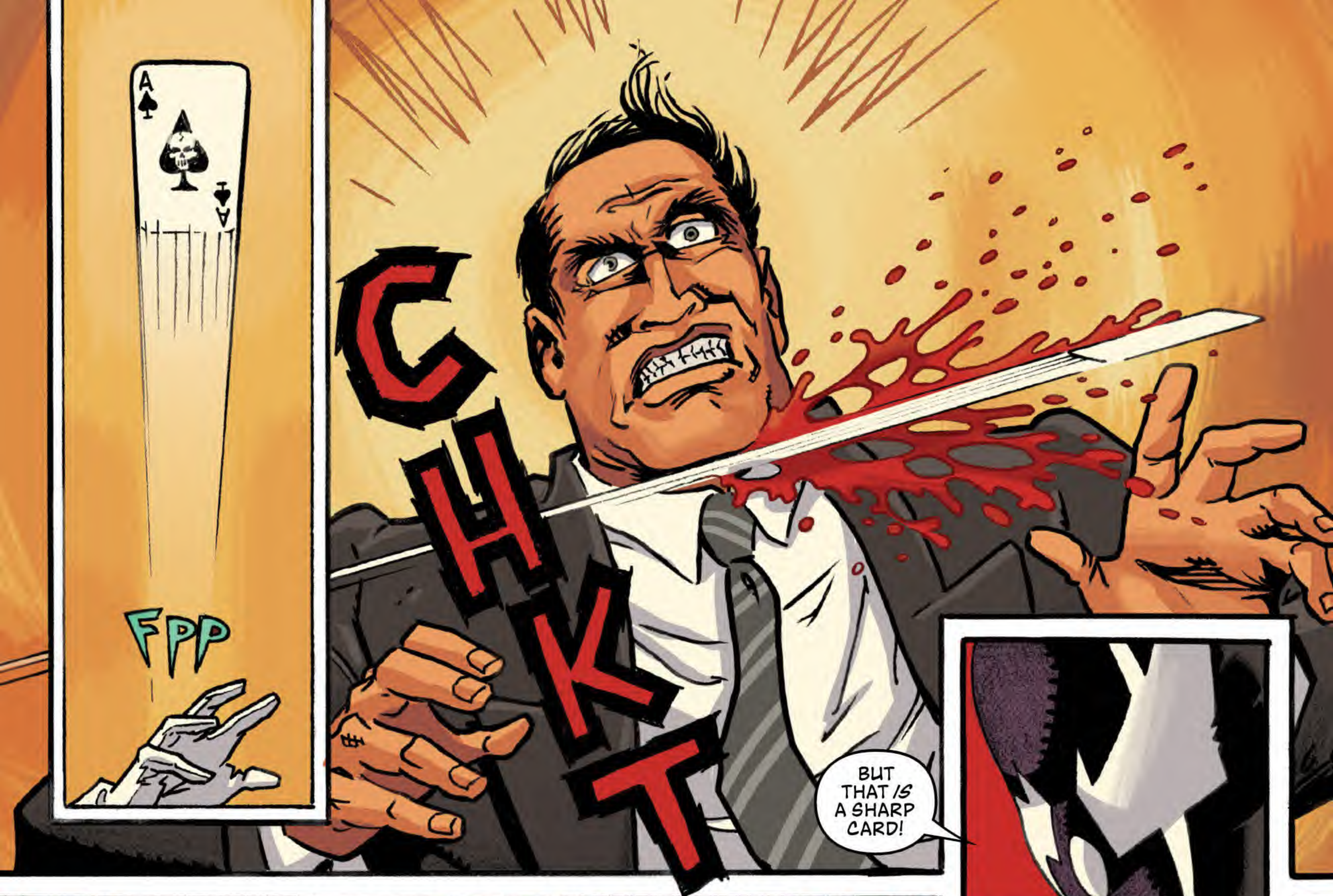


AND NOW WE'RE EXPECTED TO BEND OUR KNEES TO SOME THREE-CARD MONTE IN A HALLOWEEN MASK?

I SAY...VA FANGOOL!



YOU WILL FIND, DON GENOVESE... I AM, IN FACT, NOT A CARD SHARP.



BUT
THAT IS
A SHARP
CARD!



AS I
SAID EARLIER...YOUR
LOYALTY IS *DEMANDED!* AND
DISSENSION WILL NOT BE
TOLERATED!

REST
ASSURED, YOUR
BRUISED EGOS WILL BE
MUCH *SOOTHED* BY THE VAST
INCREASE IN REVENUE YOU
WILL SEE UNDER MY DOMINION.
PREPARE YOURSELVES,
GENTLEMEN...

THE
KINGDOM OF
GRENDEL IS
AT HAND!



BZZZ
BZZZ

KLK

BURBANK
SPEAKING.

REPORT.

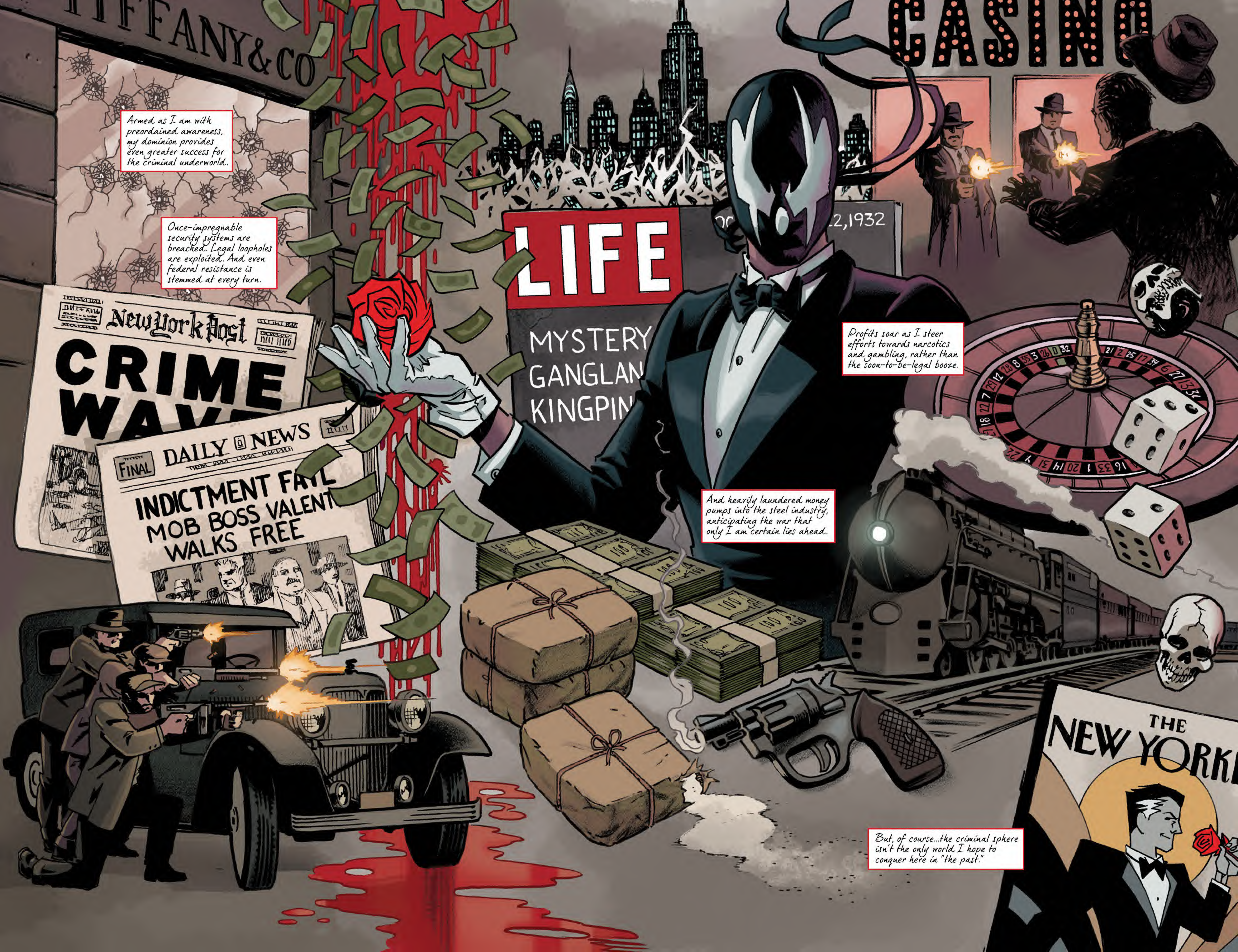
POLICE
INTELLIGENCE
INDICATES A COMPLETE
BREAKDOWN IN LUPPINO
CRIME FAMILY CHAIN
OF COMMAND.

LUPPINO
OPERATIONS HAVE
BEEN QUICKLY ABSORBED
BY THE REMAINING FOUR
FAMILIES, WITH SPECIAL
FAVOR GIVEN TO THE
VALENTIS.

AGENTS REPORT
STREET ACTIVITY PROCEEDING
UNDER CAUTION. UNCERTAINTY
OVER NEW HIERARCHY HAS
ACTUALLY LED TO REDUCTION
OF CRIME.

ROBBERY
AND HIJACKING --
DOWN BY 20%. MURDER
AND EXTORTION --
DOWN BY 30%.

THE CALM
BEFORE THE
STORM...



Armed as I am with preordained awareness, my dominion provides even greater success for the criminal underworld.

Once-impregnable security systems are breached. Legal loopholes are exploited. And even federal resistance is stemmed at every turn.

LIFE

MYSTERY
GANGLAN
KINGPIN

Profits soar as I steer efforts towards narcotics and gambling, rather than the soon-to-be-legal booze.

And heavily laundered money pumps into the steel industry, anticipating the war that only I am certain lies ahead.

But, of course...the criminal sphere isn't the only world I hope to conquer here in "the past."

TIFFANY & CO

CASINO

New York Post
CRIME WAVE

DAILY NEWS
FINAL
**INDICTMENT FAIL
MOB BOSS VALENT
WALKS FREE**

THE NEW YORKER

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
THANK YOU FOR JOINING US
TO CELEBRATE THE RELEASE
OF *GOMORRAH HIGHWAY*!
AND, NOW, I'D LIKE TO
INTRODUCE THE AUTHOR OF
THIS EXCITING NEW NOVEL..."

TONIGHT
CHARITY
GALA

"...HUNTER ROSE!"

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

TONIGHT
CHARITY
GALA

THANK YOU,
ONE AND ALL, FOR
ATTENDING THIS EVENING'S
GALA. I HOPE YOU
BROUGHT YOUR *WALLETS*
AS WELL AS YOUR
CUMMERBUNDS!

I'D LIKE
TO ANNOUNCE
THAT, IN ADDITION TO
THE MONEY RAISED HERE
TONIGHT, I AM DONATING
ONE-HALF OF ALL PROFITS
FROM THE SALE OF MY
DEBUT NOVEL TO
THE CITY'S SOUP
KITCHENS!

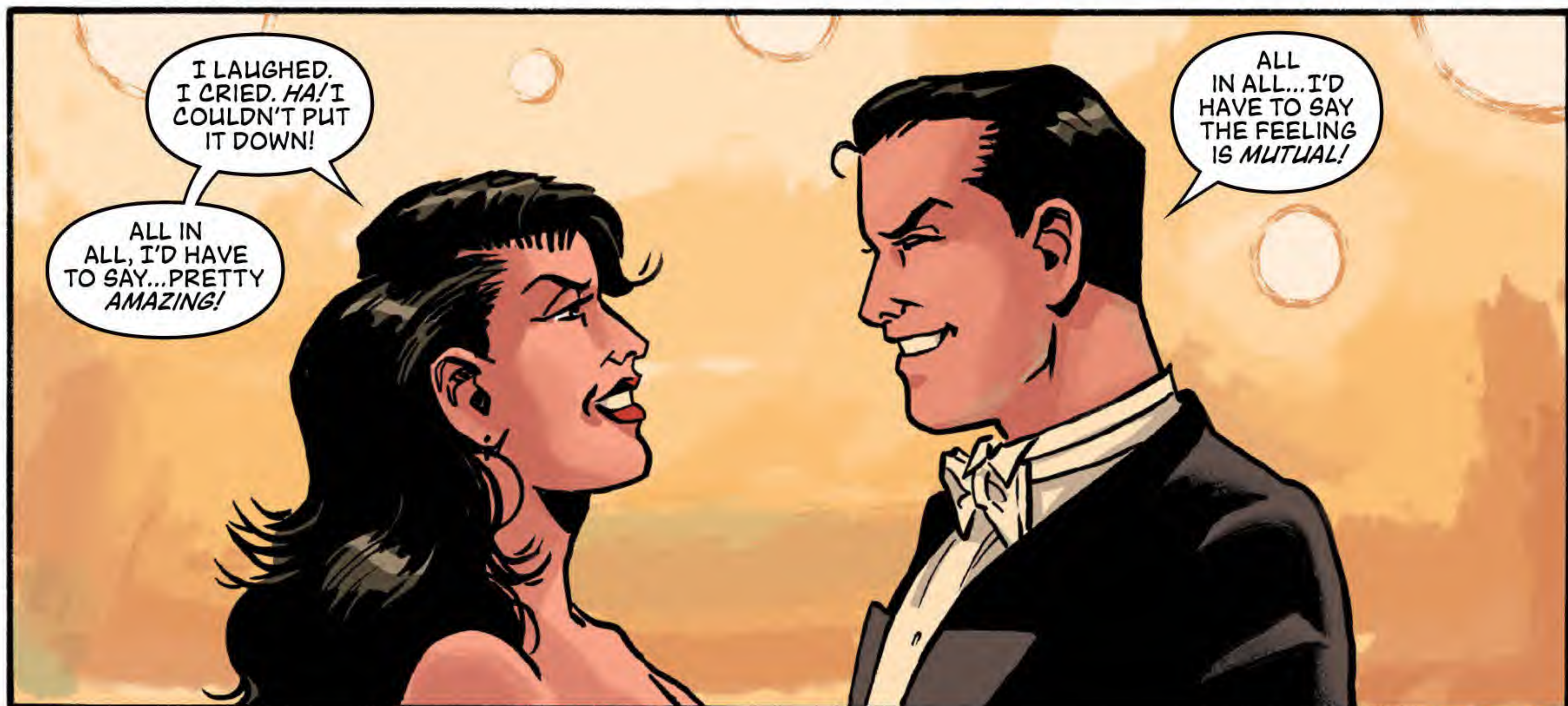
SO
ENJOY YOUR
EVENING AND,
PLEASE...GIVE
GENEROUSLY!

LET'S
HEAR IT FOR
THIS *REMARKABLE*
YOUNG MAN!

MAGNIFICENT
GESTURE, SON!
NEW YORK
THANKS YOU!

MY
PLEASURE,
MR. MAYOR.

WELLLL... I'M
IMPRESSED!





FUNNY.
I THOUGHT
WE ALREADY
WERE...



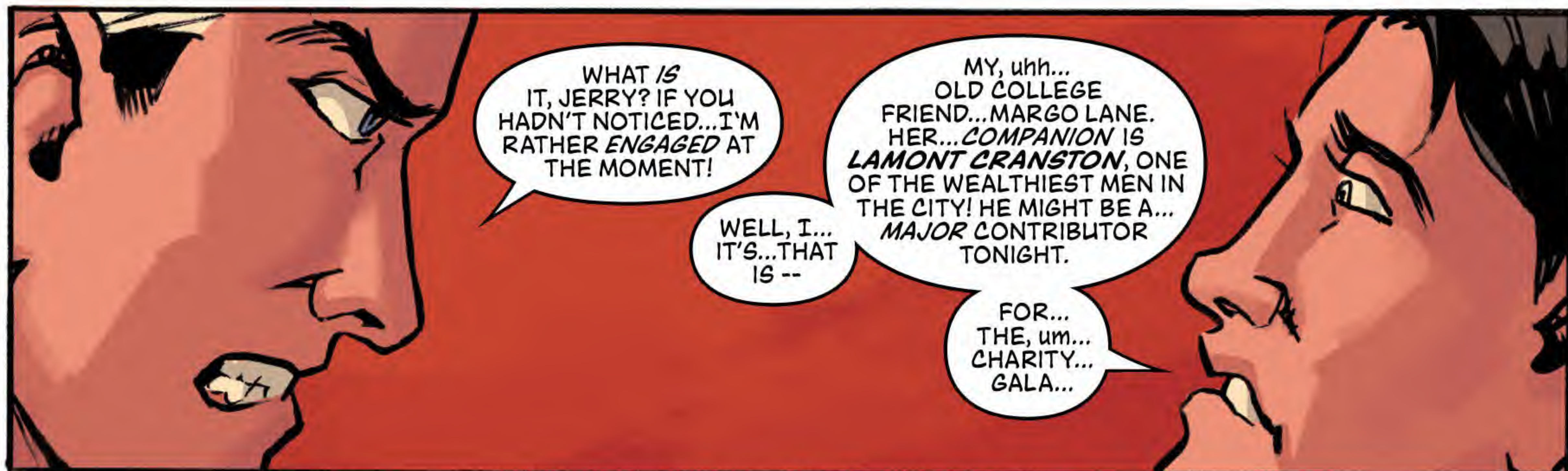
She's absolutely stunning.

Witty. Charming.

*And...an intrepid
daughter of crime!*







WHAT IS IT, JERRY? IF YOU HADN'T NOTICED... I'M RATHER *ENGAGED* AT THE MOMENT!

WELL, I... IT'S... THAT IS --

MY, uhh... OLD COLLEGE FRIEND... MARGO LANE. HER... *COMPANION* IS *LAMONT CRANSTON*, ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST MEN IN THE CITY! HE MIGHT BE A... *MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR* TONIGHT.

FOR... THE, um... CHARITY... GALA...



PLEASUED TO MEET YOU, MR. ROSE. I UNDERSTAND YOUR BOOK IS GARNERING QUITE A LOT OF ATTENTION.

YES, WELL... YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY -- "*EITHER WRITE THINGS WORTH READING OR DO THINGS WORTH THE WRITING.*"

BUT... I DO BELIEVE WE'VE MET BEFORE!

REALLY? I DON'T RECALL --



OH, YES... I NEVER FORGET A FACE!

I'D SAY THERE WASN'T A *SHADOW* OF A DOUBT!



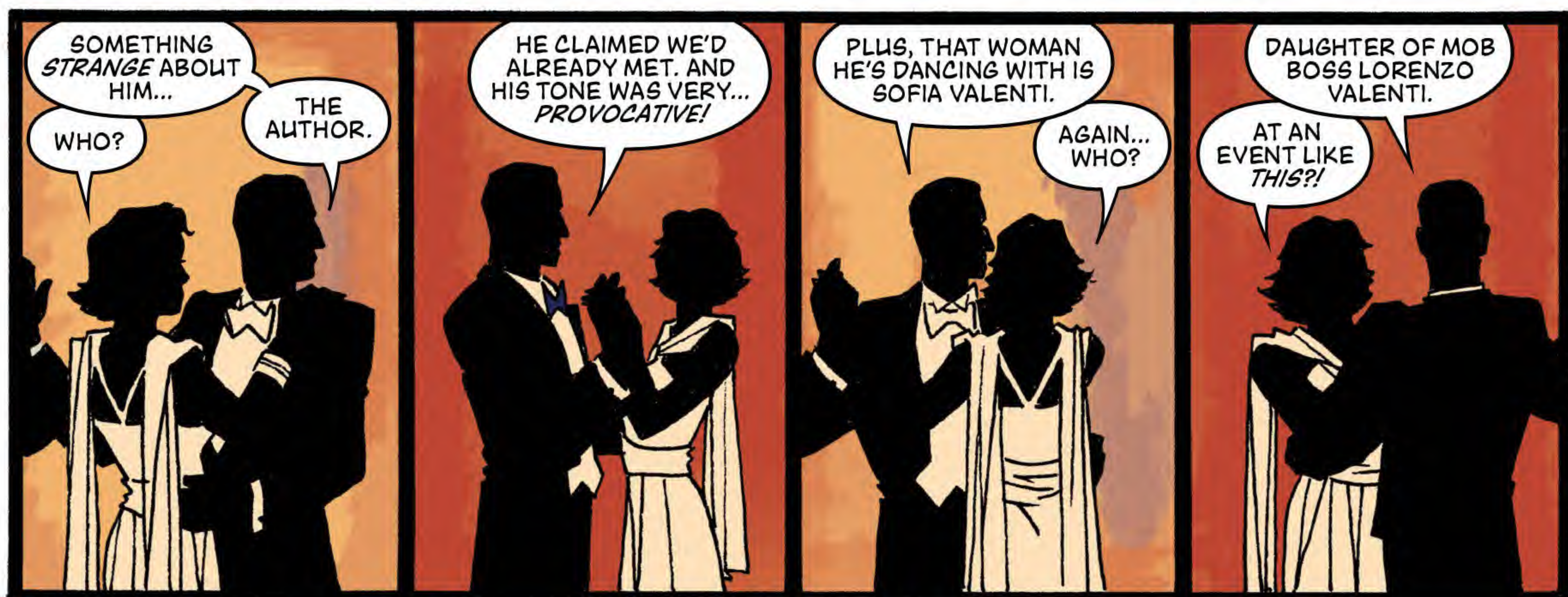
COME, LAMONT...IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE YOU AND I CUT A RUG TOGETHER.

Eh...?! YES, I...

TILL WE MEET AGAIN, MR. CRANSTON...

GOOD EVENING... MR. ROSE.

NOW THEN, WHERE WERE WE...?



SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT HIM...

THE AUTHOR.

HE CLAIMED WE'D ALREADY MET. AND HIS TONE WAS VERY... PROVOCATIVE!

PLUS, THAT WOMAN HE'S DANCING WITH IS SOFIA VALENTI.

AGAIN... WHO?

DAUGHTER OF MOB BOSS LORENZO VALENTI.

AT AN EVENT LIKE THIS?!



VERY STRANGE, INDEED.

PERHAPS IT'S TIME THE "DOLCE DON" ANSWERED A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS NEW, MYSTERIOUS OVERLORD, WITH A VISIT...

"...FROM THE SHADOW!"







SONUVABITCH!
THINK YOU CAN TAKE
AN OLD MAN WHILE HE
SLEEPS?!

C'MON,
ASSHOLE! TI
AMMAZZO!



LORENZO
VALENTI!

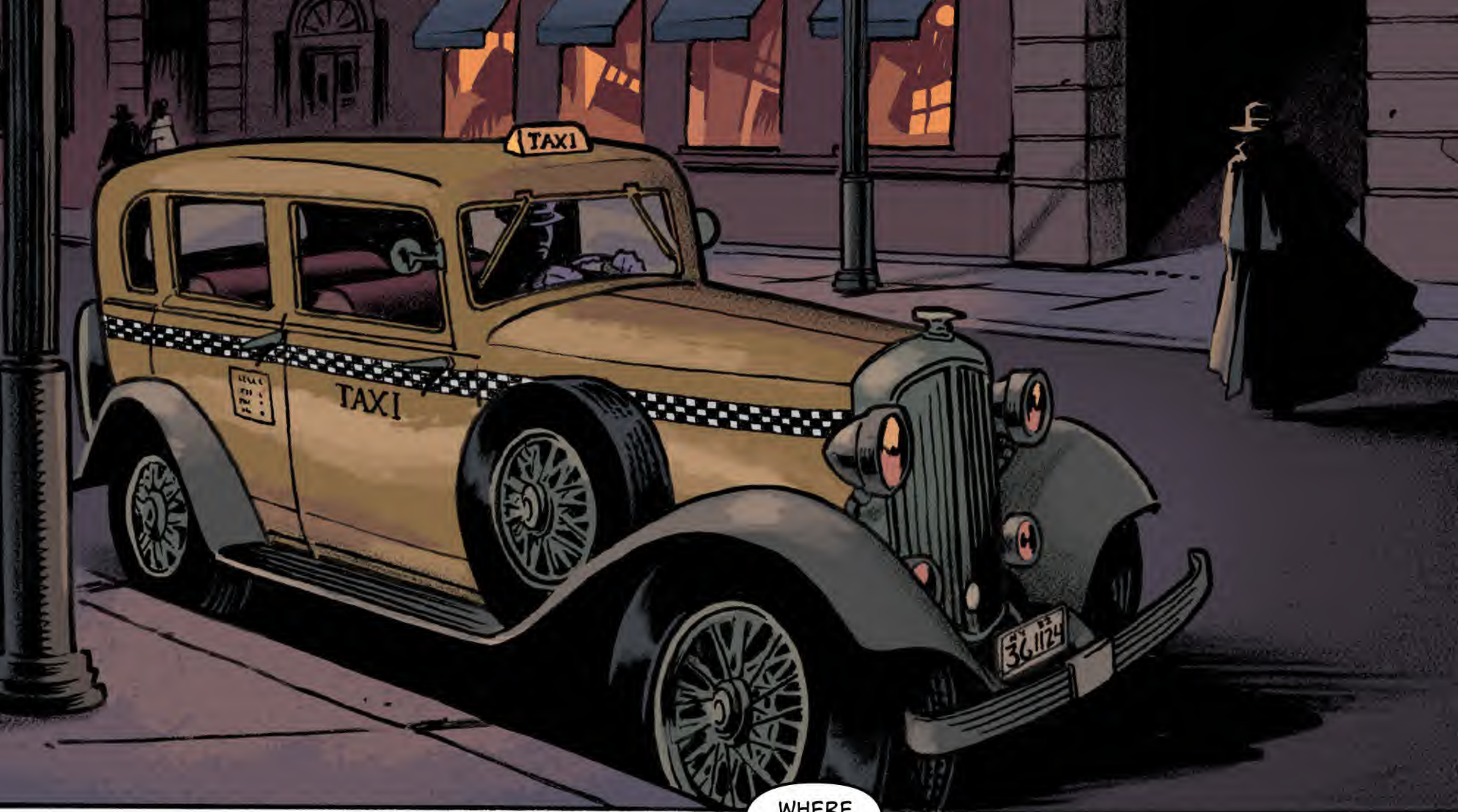
YOU
ARE **BOUND**
BY THE FORCE
OF MY WILL!

I...

I...

I...





WHERE
TO, BOSS?



THE
SANCTUM,
MOE. TAKE CARE
WE ARE NOT
FOLLOWED.



STANDARD
PROCEDURE,
BOSS.



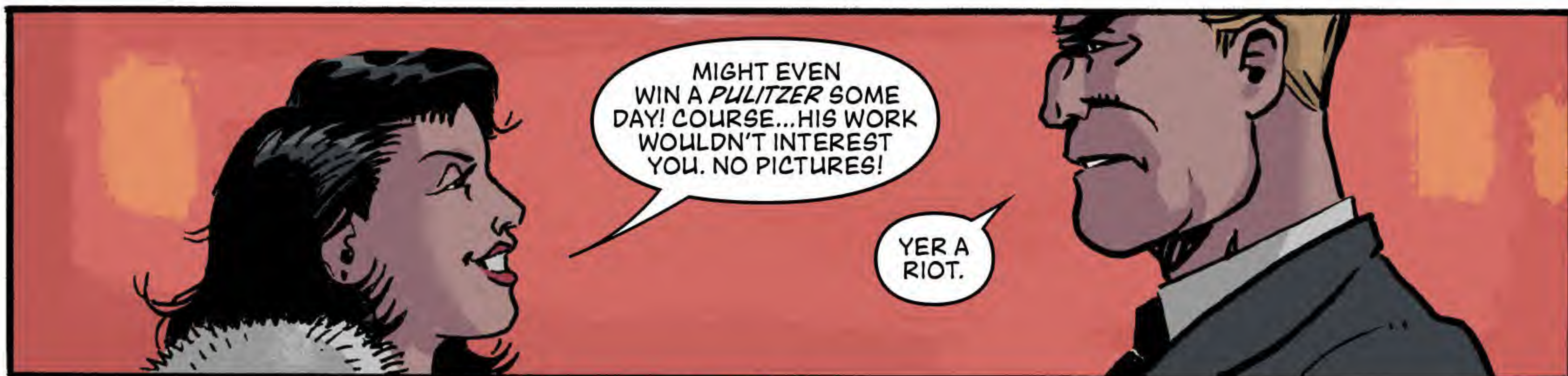


I KNOW YOU FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE, JOHNNY...

...BUT I'M A *BIG* GIRL. AND I REALLY DON'T NEED A CHAPERONE!

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN, SOFIA?

WELL, IF YOU MUST KNOW...I SPENT THE NIGHT DANCING WITH A BRILLIANT YOUNG AUTHOR. HE'S THE ABSOLUTE TOAST OF THE TOWN!



MIGHT EVEN WIN A *PULITZER* SOME DAY! COURSE...HIS WORK WOULDN'T INTEREST YOU. NO PICTURES!

YER A RIOT.



HE REALLY *SWEPT* ME OFF MY FEET! TILL HE SUDDENLY HAD TO CUT AND RUN, MIDWAY THROUGH THE EVENING...
~sigh~ MEN!

ANYWAY, JOHNNY... WHY ARE YOU *HERE*?



I...GOT NEWS. 'BOUT YOUR FRIEND... *FRANNIE*.



FRANNIE...?!

WHAT ABOUT FRANNIE?!



SHE... SHE'S DEAD.

HER BUILDING'S SUPER FOUND HER WHEN HE CAME TO CHECK THE PIPES. BEATEN TO A PULP.

COPS ARE LOOKIN' INTO IT BUT, Y'KNOW...WITH A GOOD-TIME GAL LIKE HER...THEY AIN'T LOOKIN' TOO HARD.

STILL... I'M SURE YOU CAN *GUESS* WHO PROBABLY DUNNIT.



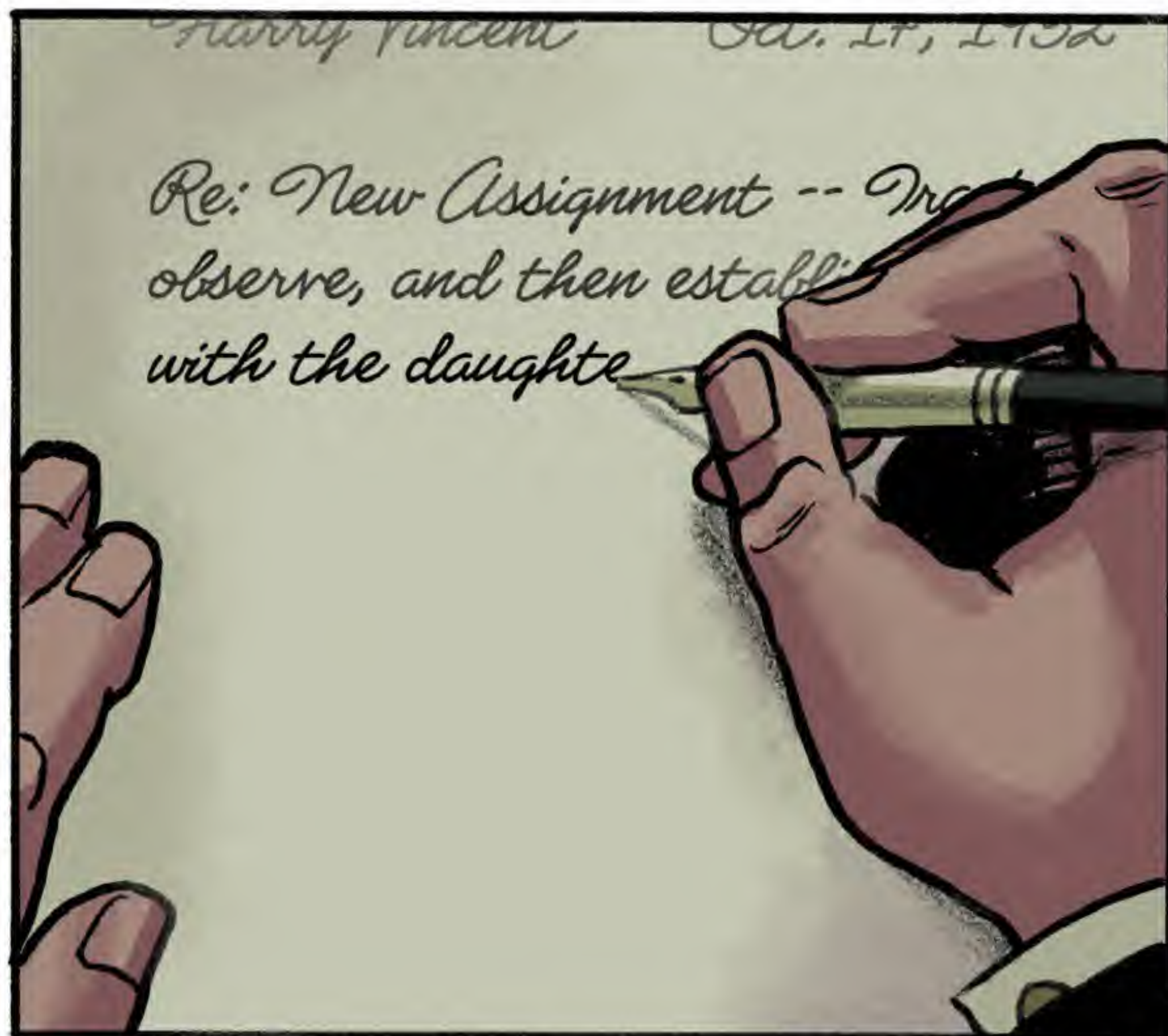
sob
OHHH... OHMIGOD... MIGOD!
sob

HEY... IT'LL BE OKAY --



SHUT UP, JOHNNY!



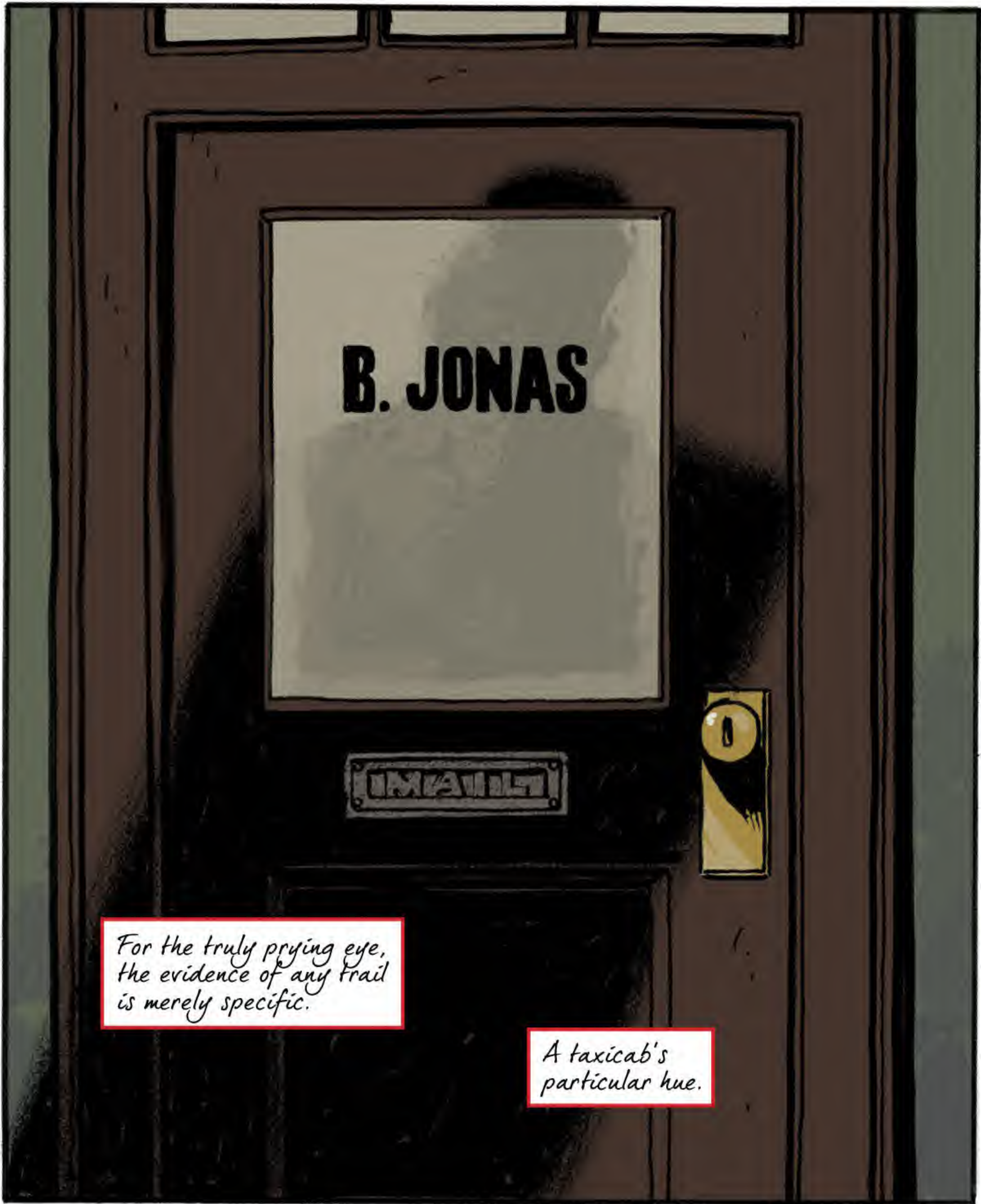




"Needle in a haystack."

"Slippery as an eel."

Common metaphors for the hard to locate. But only to the dense and unobservant.

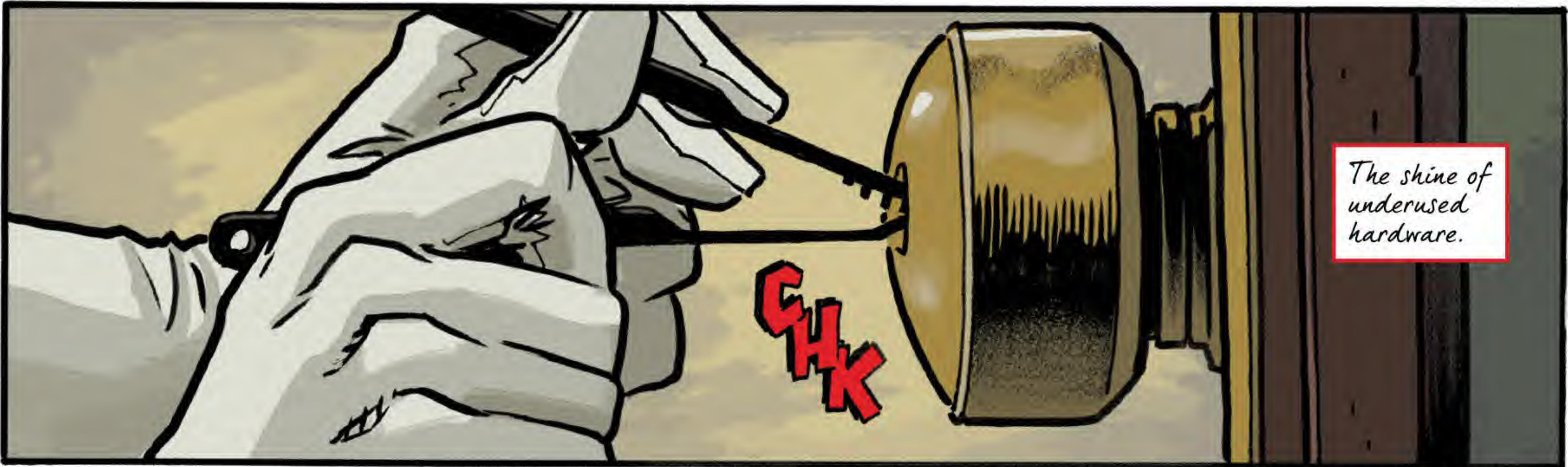


For the truly prying eye, the evidence of any trail is merely specific.

A taxicab's particular hue.



Disruptions in dust patterns.



The shine of underused hardware.



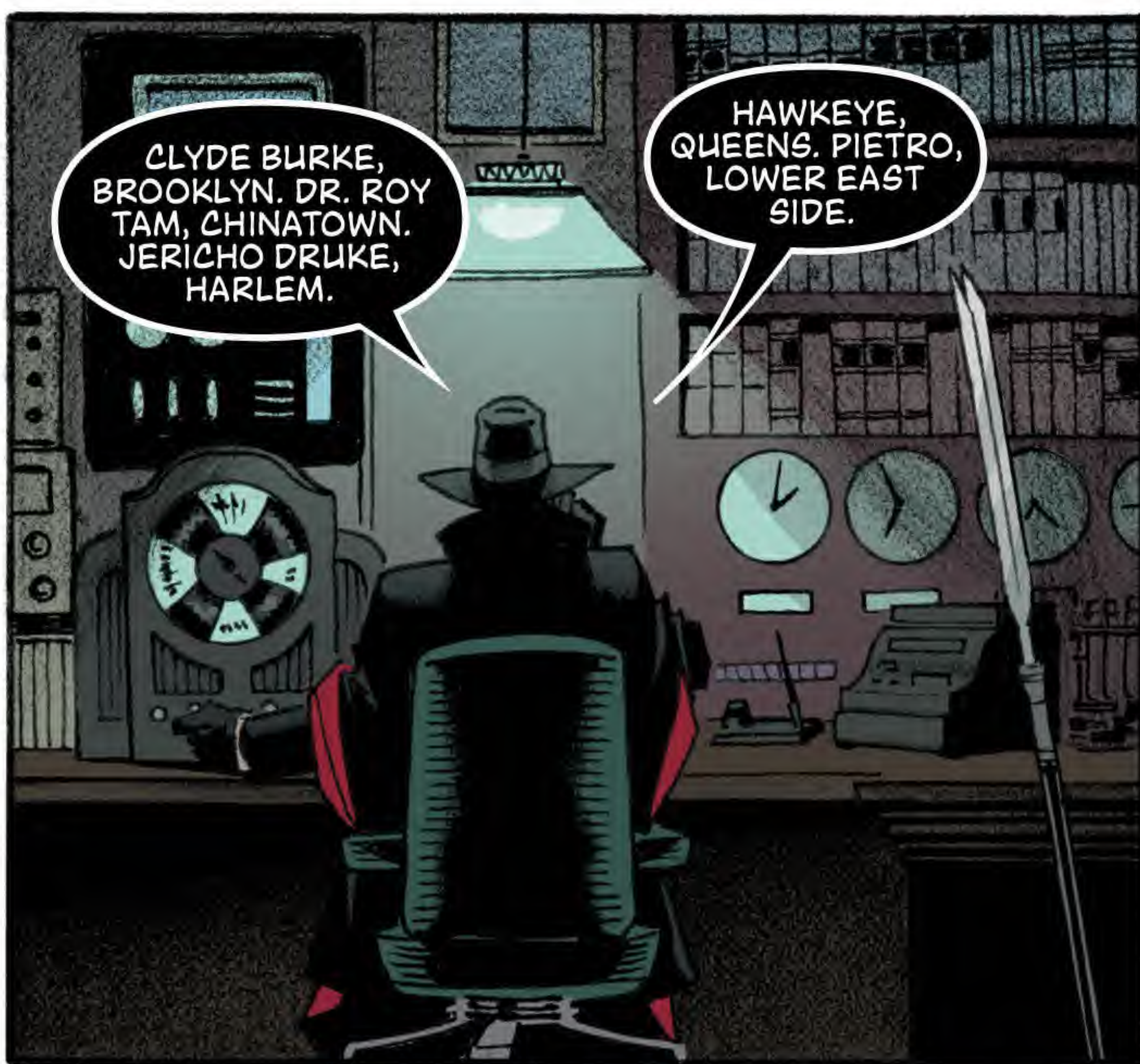
The residue of city streets.

The slightest depression in a section of wall molding.



Such details have never escaped my notice!

...DISPATCH FOLLOWING AGENTS TO THESE LOCALES: CLIFF MARSLAND, THE BRONX.



CLYDE BURKE, BROOKLYN. DR. ROY TAM, CHINATOWN. JERICO DRUKE, HARLEM.

HAWKEYE, QUEENS. PIETRO, LOWER EAST SIDE.

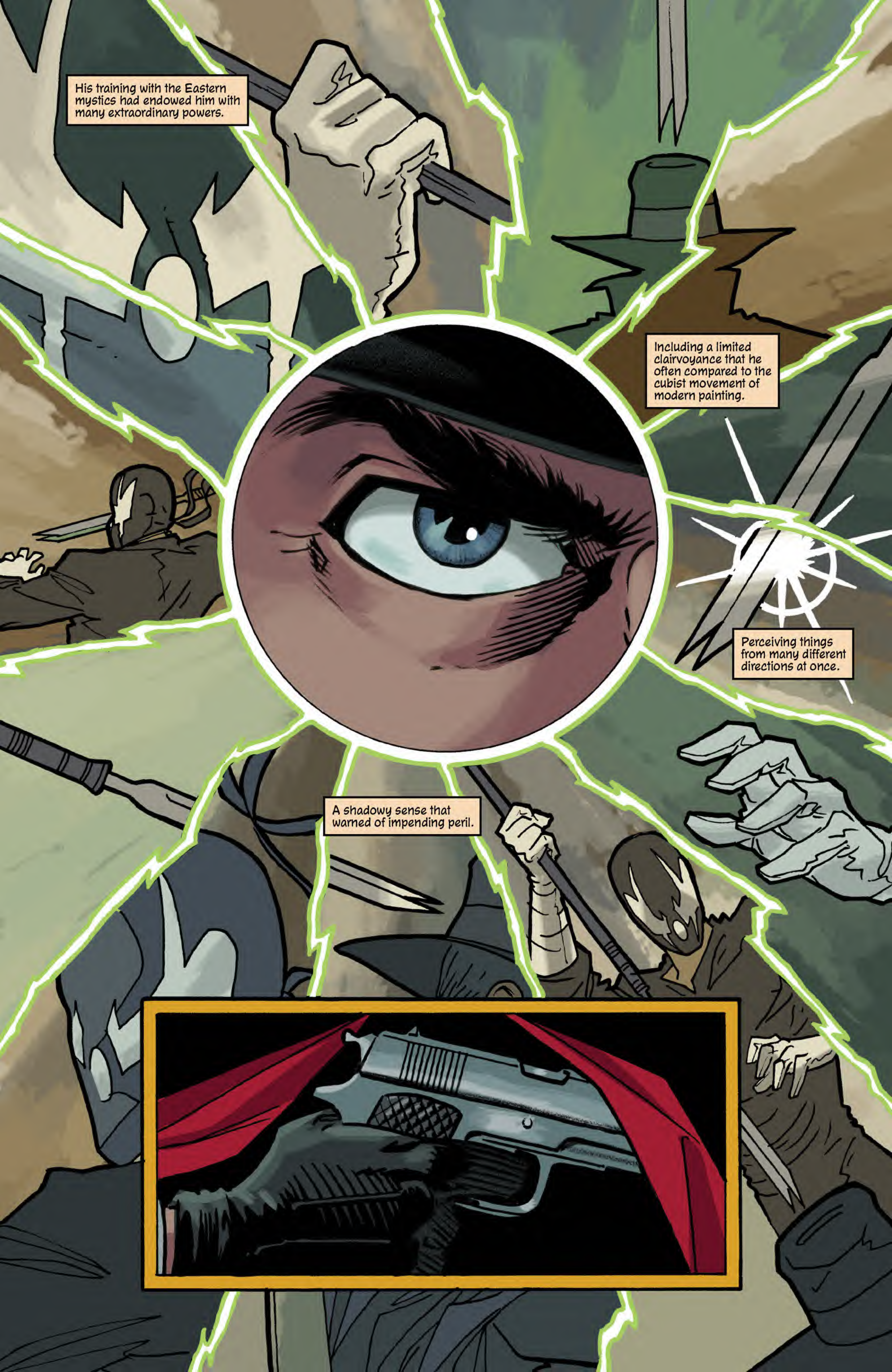


ALL AGENTS ARE TO REPORT ANY ACTIVITY RELATED TO MYSTERIOUS NEW CRIME BOSS, CODE NAME --



"GRENNEL."





His training with the Eastern mystics had endowed him with many extraordinary powers.

Including a limited clairvoyance that he often compared to the cubist movement of modern painting.

Perceiving things from many different directions at once.

A shadowy sense that warned of impending peril.

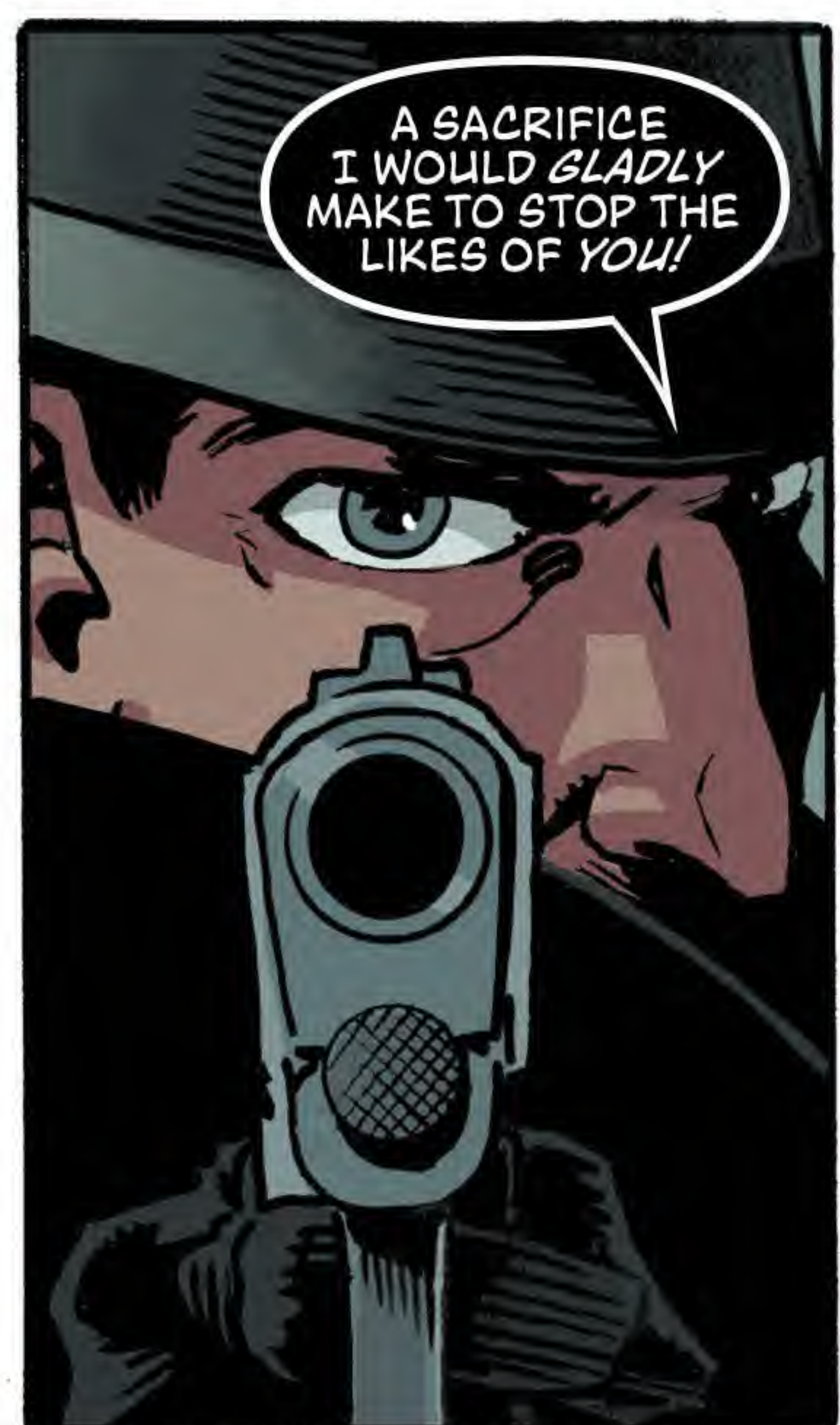




THE RECOIL
WOULD CAUSE MY
FINGER TO SPASM...
AND BLOW YOUR
HEAD STRAIGHT
OFF.

WELL,
WELL...KEEN
AND SWIFT ON
THE DRAW!

THINK YOU
CAN PULL THAT
TRIGGER BEFORE
I BURY THESE
BLADES IN YOUR
THROAT?



A SACRIFICE
I WOULD GLADLY
MAKE TO STOP THE
LIKES OF YOU!



SO THEN, IT
WOULD APPEAR...
WE'RE AT A BIT OF
AN IMPASSE.

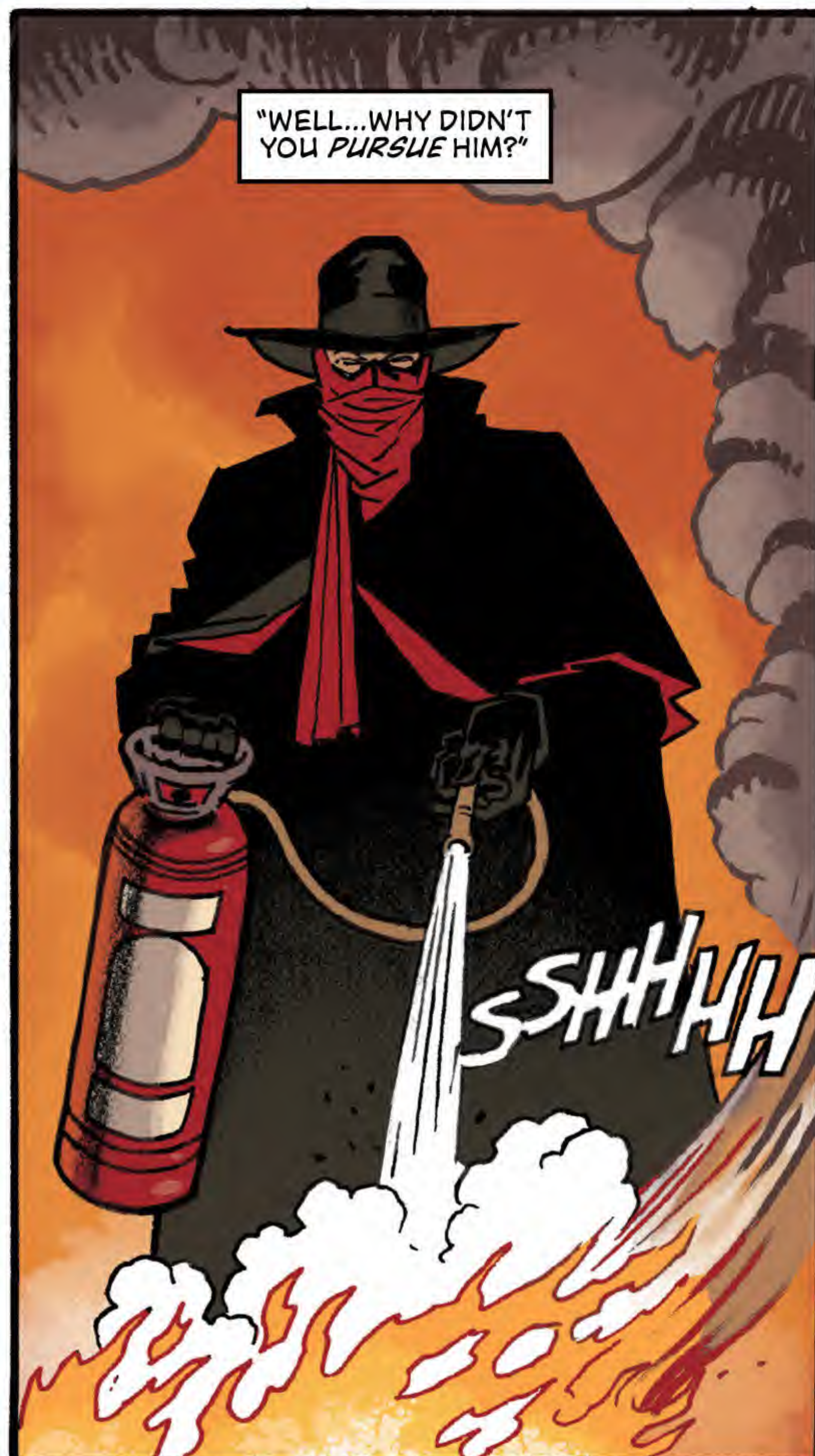


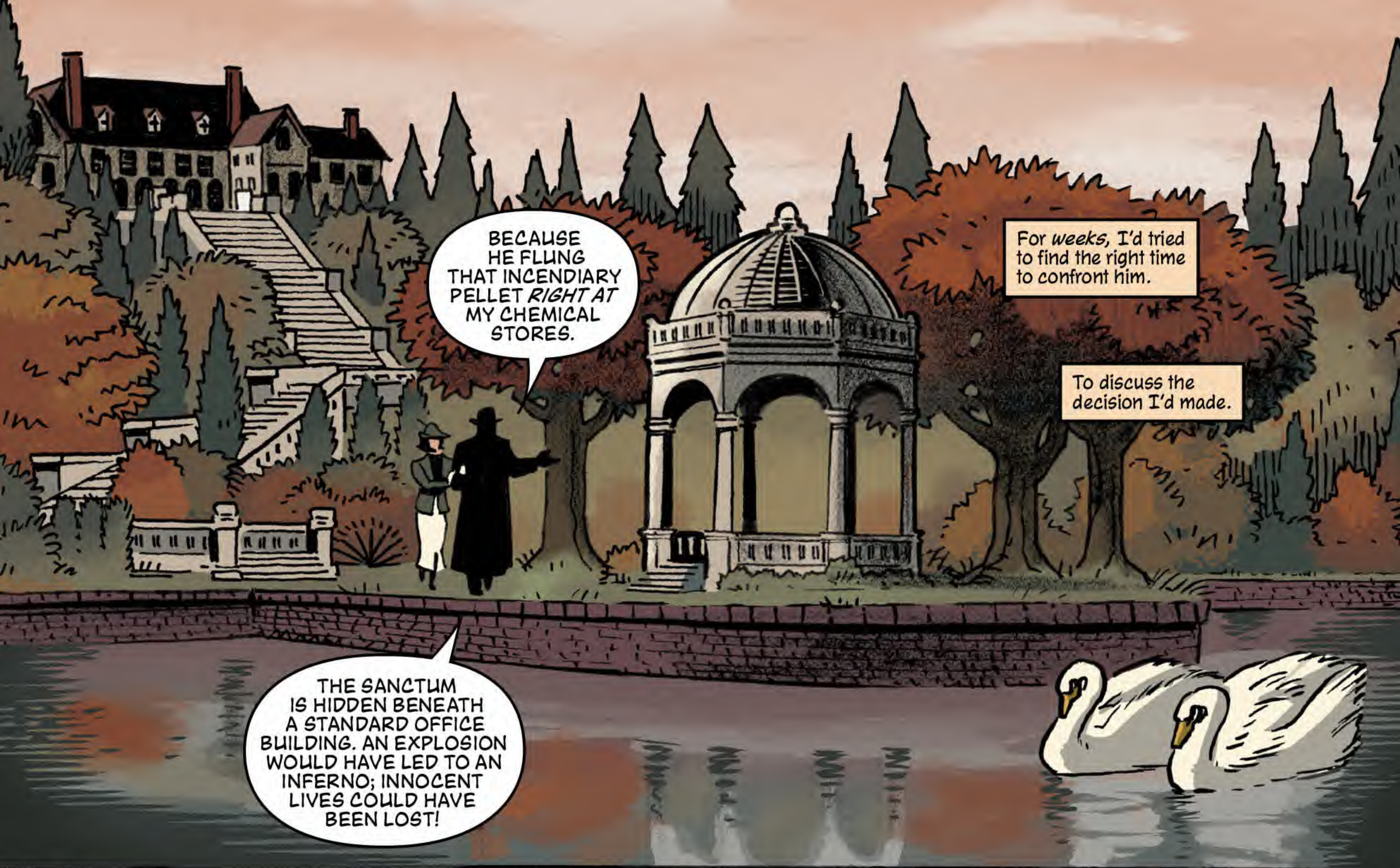
I, FOR ONE,
QUITE ENJOY OUR
LITTLE TRYSTS--

SAVE
YOUR BANTER,
VILLAIN! THERE'S NO
WAY YOU'RE LEAVING
THIS SANCTUM
ALIVE!



I BET
YOU SAY THAT
TO ALL THE BAD
GUYS!





BECAUSE HE FLUNG THAT INCENDIARY PELLET *RIGHT* AT MY CHEMICAL STORES.

For *weeks*, I'd tried to find the right time to confront him.

To discuss the decision I'd made.

THE SANCTUM IS HIDDEN BENEATH A STANDARD OFFICE BUILDING. AN EXPLOSION WOULD HAVE LED TO AN INFERNO; INNOCENT LIVES COULD HAVE BEEN LOST!

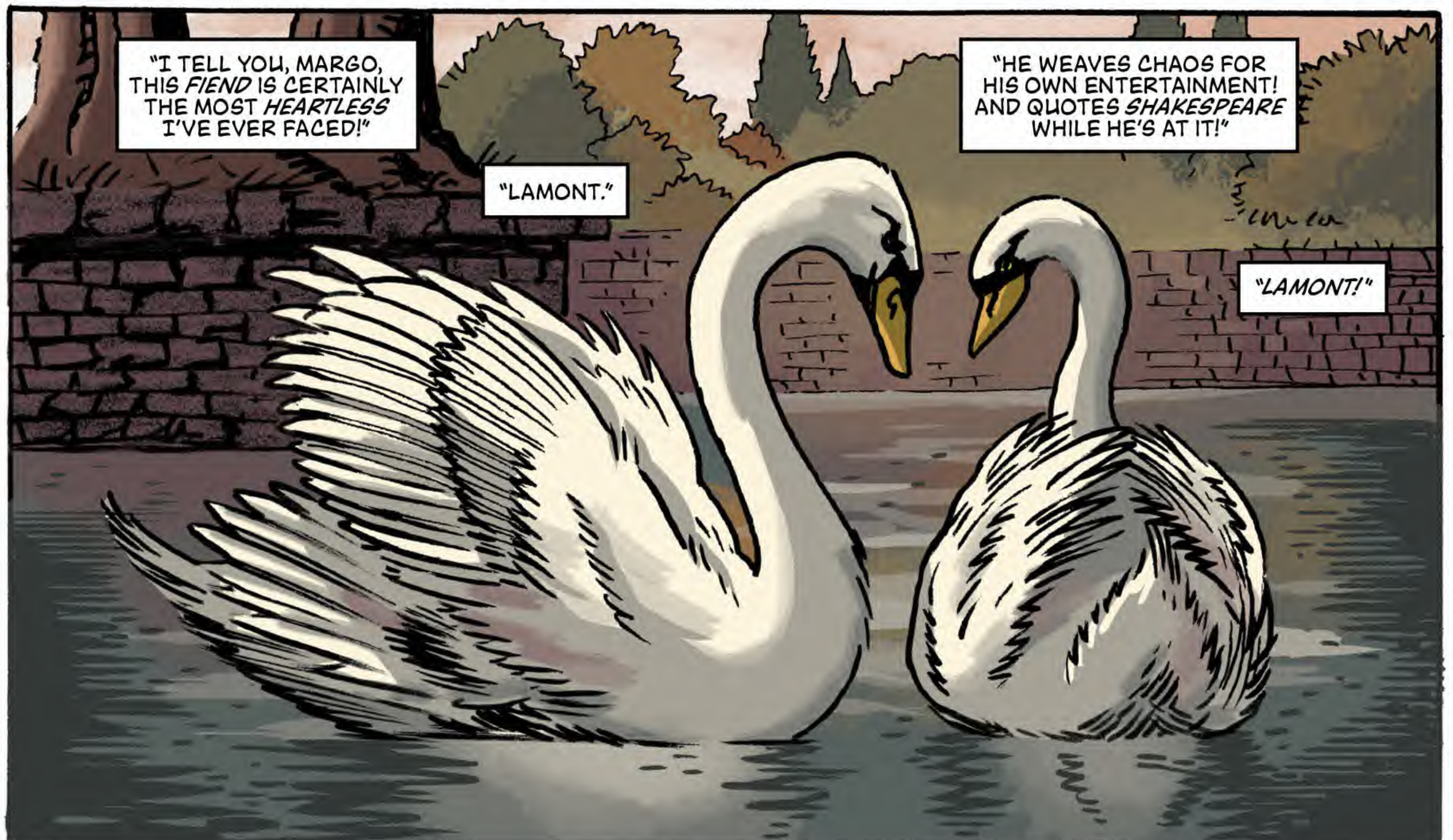


HE *KNEW* THAT, OF COURSE...

AND CASUALLY TOYED WITH POTENTIAL DISASTER! ALL PART OF HIS BLOODY GAME...!

But it never seemed the right time.

LAMONT, I...



"I TELL YOU, MARGO, THIS *FIEND* IS CERTAINLY THE MOST *HEARTLESS* I'VE EVER FACED!"

"LAMONT."

"HE WEAVES CHAOS FOR HIS OWN ENTERTAINMENT! AND QUOTES *SHAKESPEARE* WHILE HE'S AT IT!"

"LAMONT!"



YES,
DARLING?

I...I'M
LEAVING.

YOU...
WHAT?



I'VE BEEN
TRYING TO TELL YOU
FOR SOME TIME NOW.
I RECENTLY INHERITED
A SUBSTANTIAL SUM...A
SMALL FORTUNE, IN
FACT.

AND
I'VE BEEN
THINKING...



PERHAPS...
THIS LIFE ISN'T
FOR ME. I FIND
MYSELF...*DISTANT*
FROM YOU. FROM
YOUR *RELENTLESS*
CRUSADE.



I'LL ALWAYS
CHERISH OUR
LIFE TOGETHER.
BUT...

I'M AFRAID
I MUST FIND
A DIFFERENT
PATH.



He could have swayed me
with a single endearment.
I would have stayed.

But he never
said a word.





F-FRANNIE?!

JESUS!
BUT, I...
THOUGHT
I--

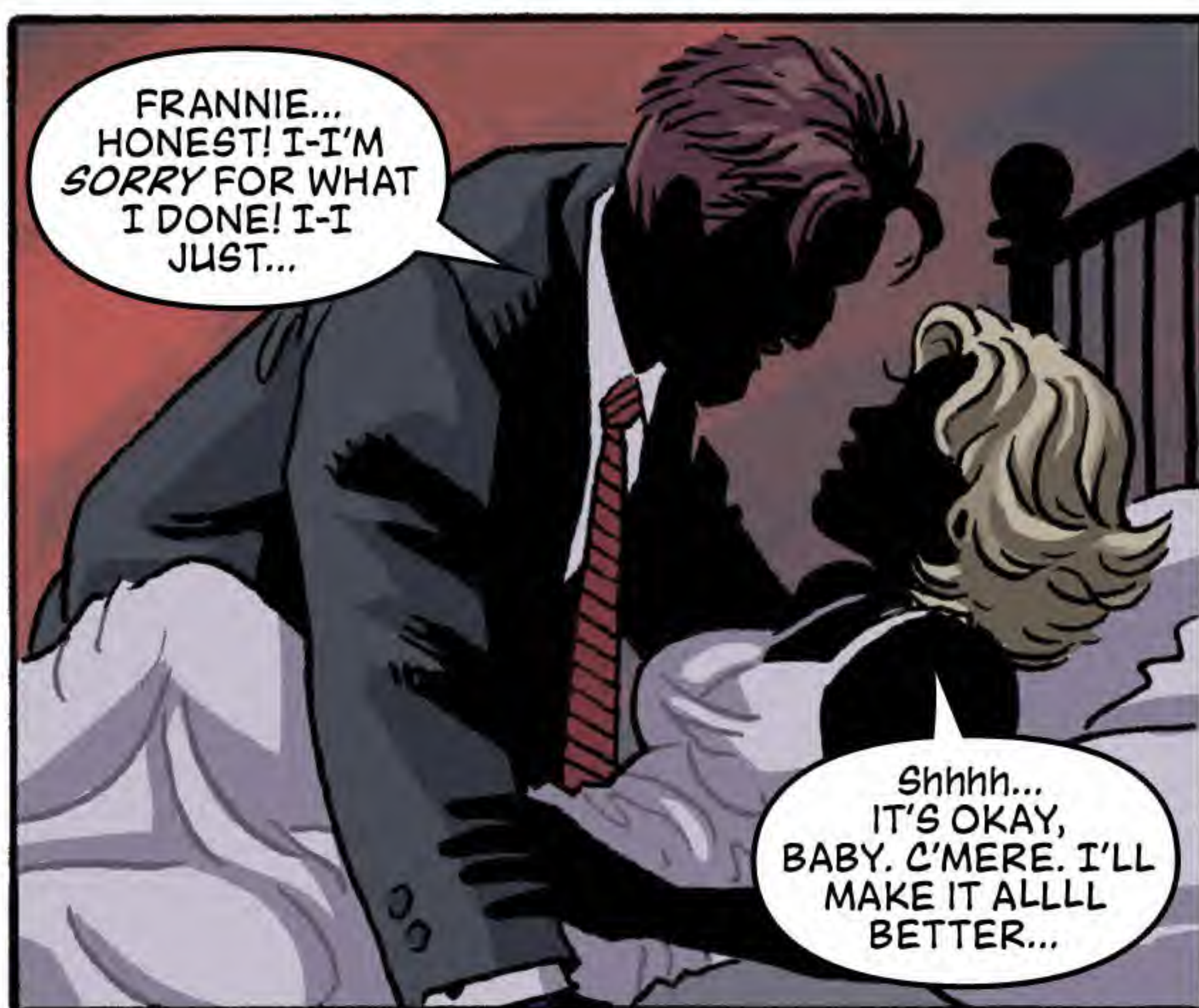


IT'S
OKAY, BABY.
I'M OKAY.
REALLY...

AND
I'M NOT MAD
OR NOTHIN'. I
KNOW...YOU JUST
CAN'T *HELP* THE
WAY YOU GET
SOMETIMES.



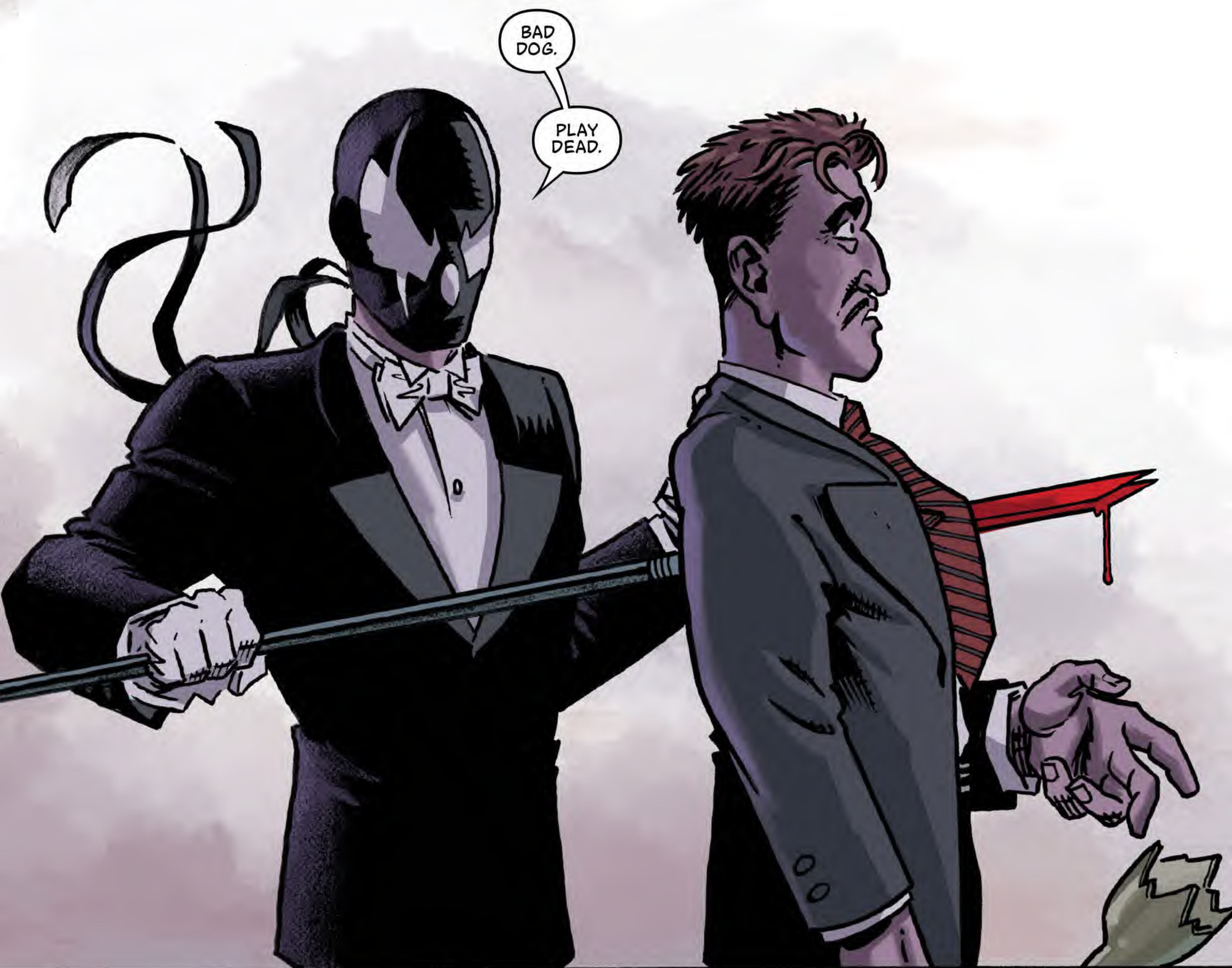
Ooooh...I
MISSED YOU,
BABY! I MISS
THE WAY YOU
TOUCH ME!



FRANNIE...
HONEST! I-I'M
SORRY FOR WHAT
I DONE! I-I
JUST...

Shhhh...
IT'S OKAY,
BABY. C'MERE. I'LL
MAKE IT ALLLL
BETTER...









On the day of your death,
I **SWORE** to never share
my heart with another.

To never cherish anyone
the way I longed for you.

But how does that vow
even exist, here and now...

...over a decade
before you were
even born?



WELL...I
SUPPOSE I
SHOULD SAY THAT
I'M SURPRISED. BUT,
SOMEHOW...IT **ALL**
MAKES WICKED
SENSE!

SO...
ISN'T IT **YOUR**
TURN TO UNWRAP
SOMETHING?



Part of his crusade involved pirate radio broadcasts.

That pitiless, disembodied voice proclaiming war on the forces of crime. Words of judgment. And condemnation.

A FETID PESTILENCE HAS INVADDED THIS CITY.

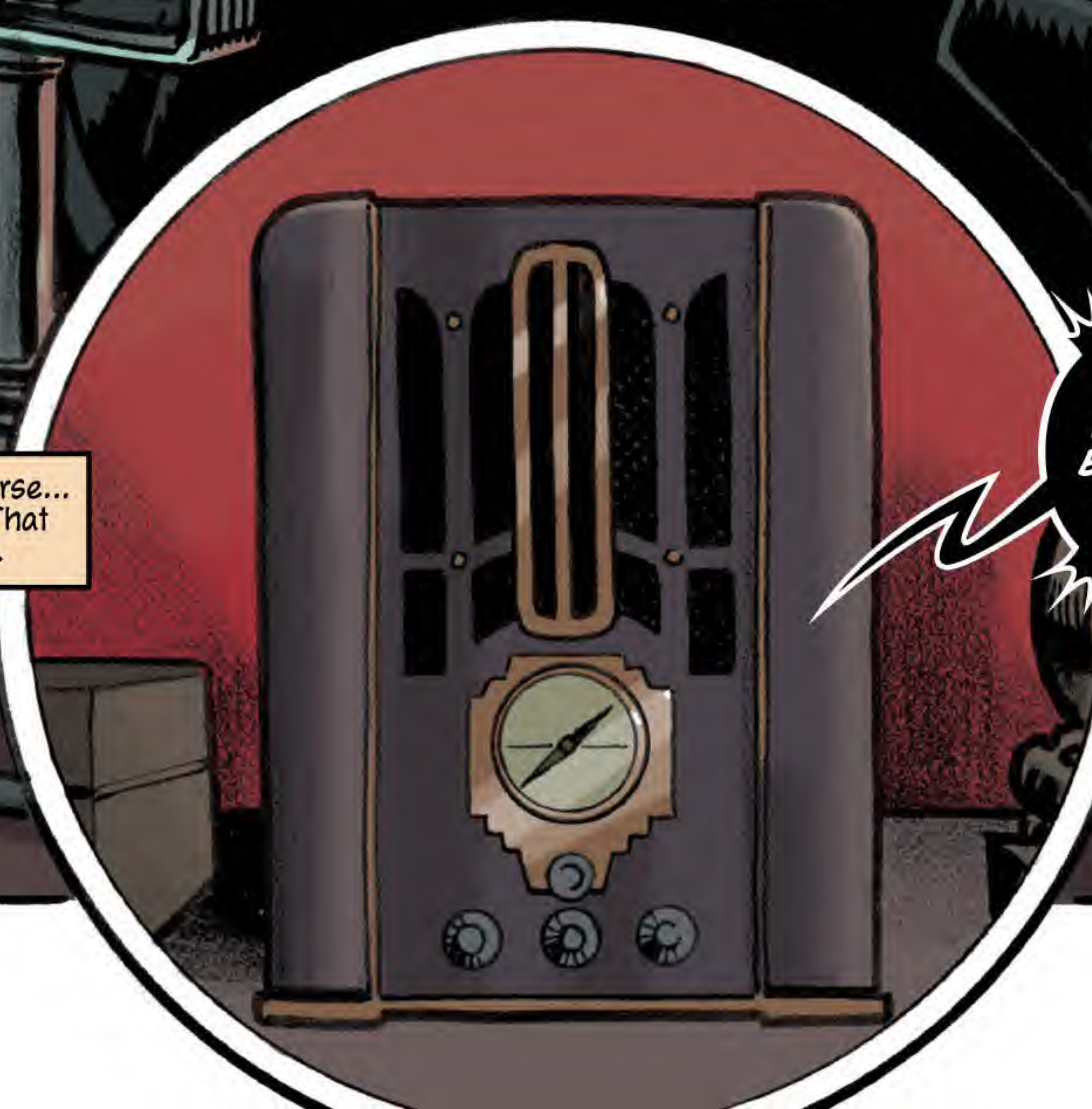
THE ORGANIZED MOBS, ALREADY *DOOMED* BY THEIR ATROCITIES, HAVE BEEN USURPED BY AN ARCHFIEND WHO NOW HOLDS AUTHORITY OVER THEIR FOUL AND BRUTAL RANKS.

LET ALL WHO SERVE THE DOMINION OF *GRENDL* TAKE HEED...

BETRAY YOUR WRETCHED AND MYSTERIOUS OVERLORD AND YOU *MAY* SURVIVE THE SCOURGE OF MY VENGEANCE!

And, of course... the laugh. That awful laugh.

THE WEED OF CRIME BEARS BITTER FRUIT. CRIME DOES NOT PAY!



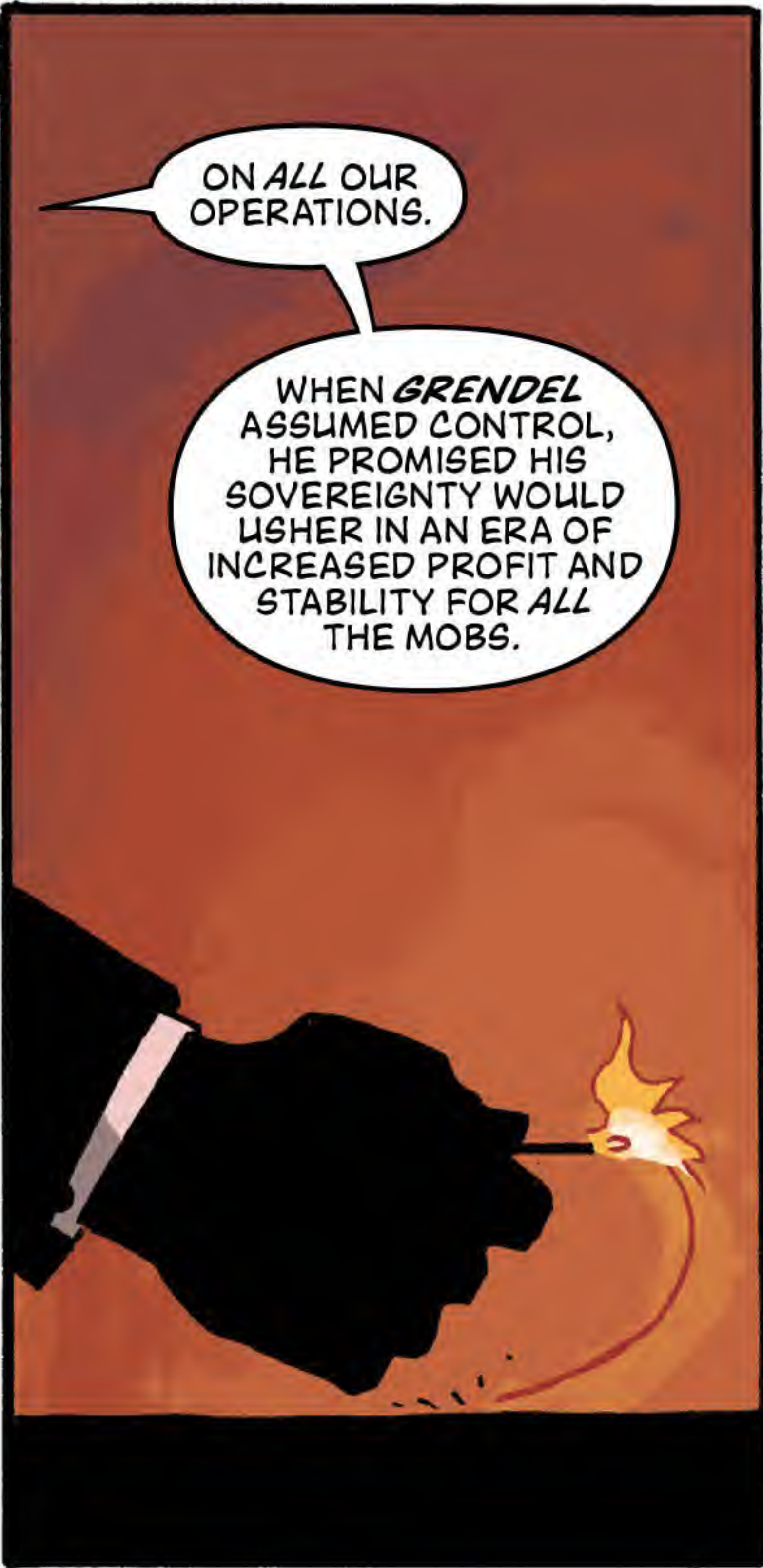


CHRIST! CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS GUY? HOW THE HELL DOES HE MANAGE TO CUT IN ON THE AIRWAVES LIKE THAT?

THE SHADOW KNOWS!

HOWEVER HE MANAGES IT... HE'S CASTING FAR TOO MUCH LIGHT ON OUR OPERATIONS.

HAHAHAHA



ON ALL OUR OPERATIONS.

WHEN *GRENDL* ASSUMED CONTROL, HE PROMISED HIS SOVEREIGNTY WOULD USHER IN AN ERA OF INCREASED PROFIT AND STABILITY FOR ALL THE MOBS.



IF HE CAN'T *FULL*ILL THAT PLEDGE, THEN PERHAPS IT'S TIME TO CONSIDER... AN ALTERNATIVE TO HIS LEADERSHIP.

Ahh... PERHAPS.



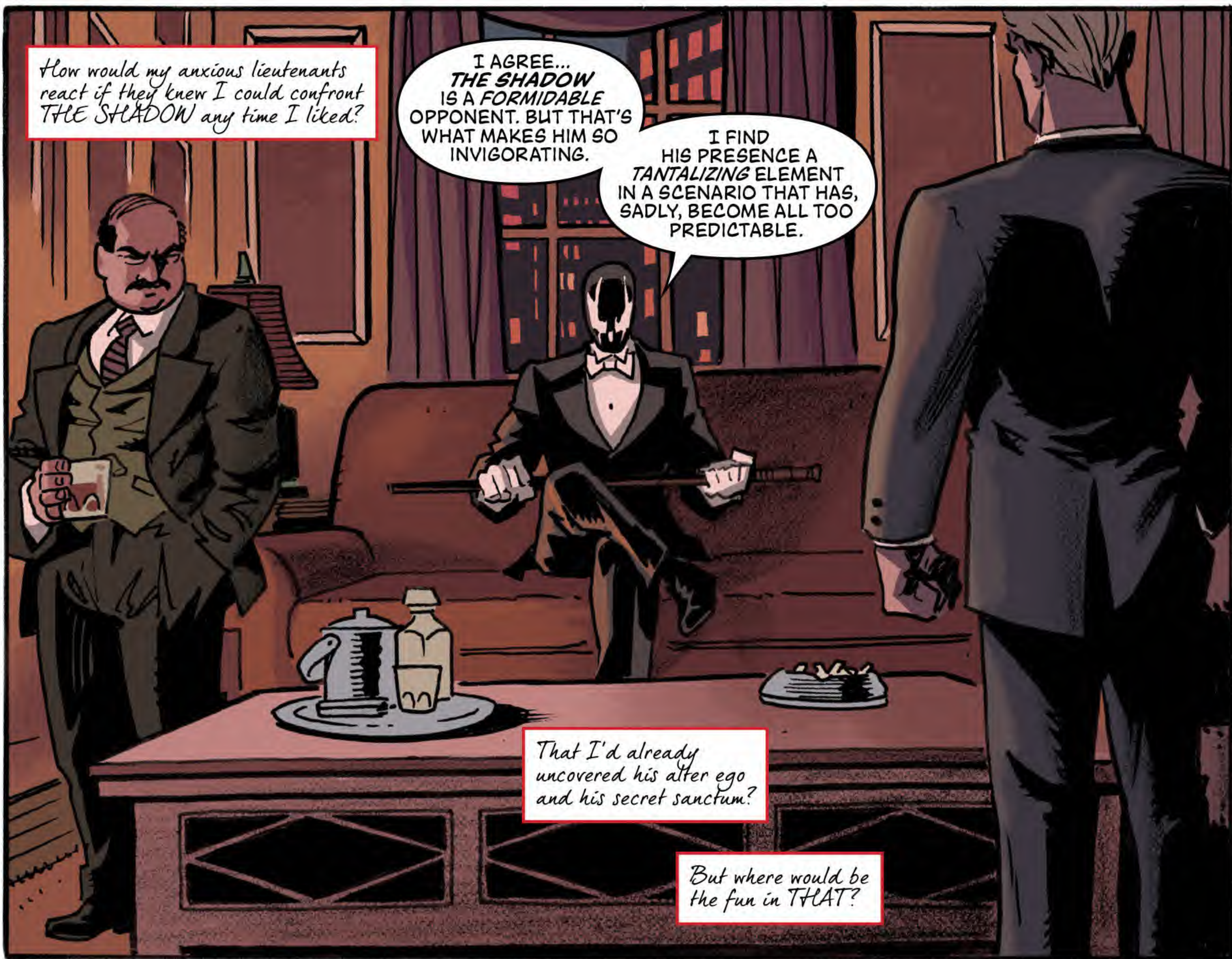
FIRST MANHATTAN BANK

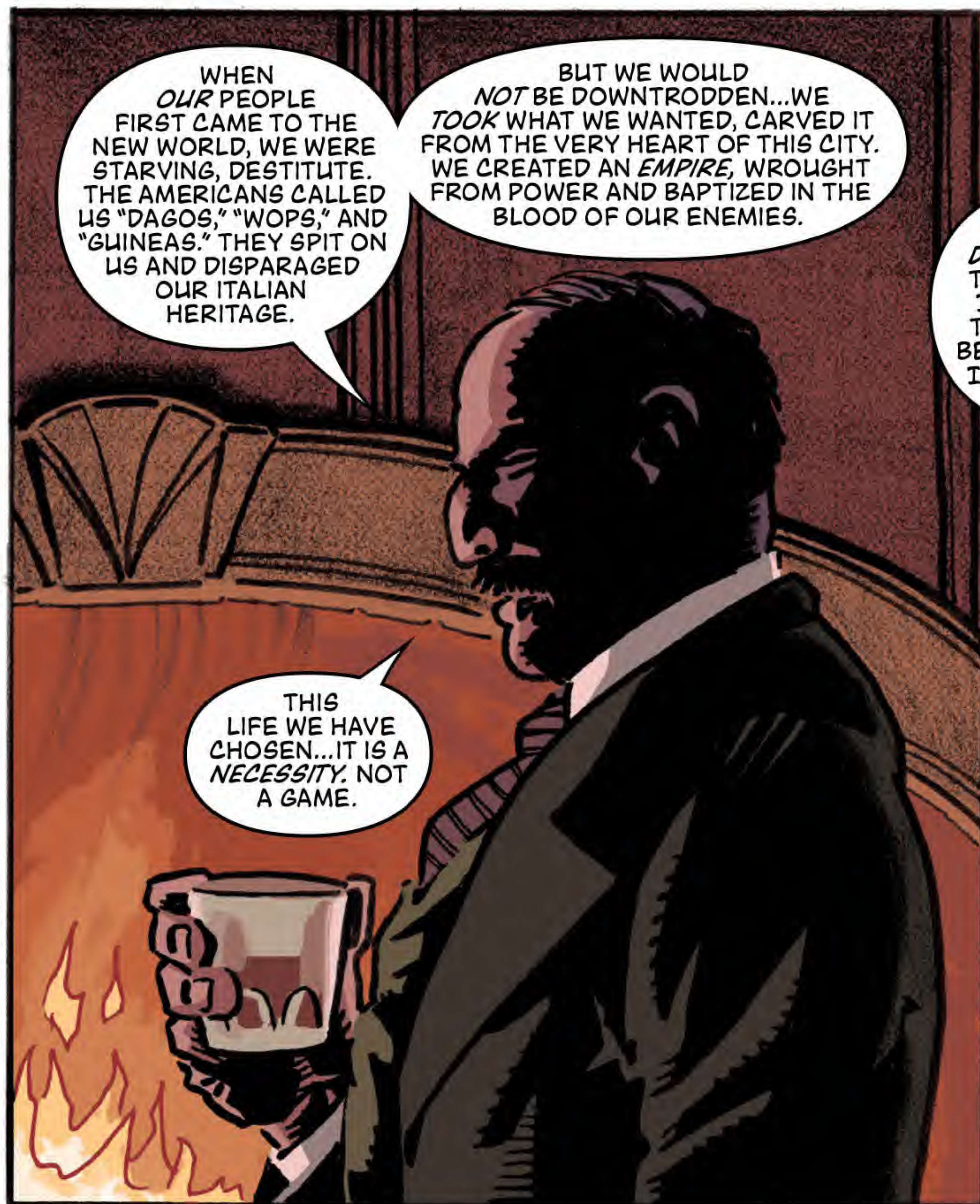
"SO SHE SEZ TO ME, 'I A/N'T THAT KINDA GIRL!' "











WHEN *OUR* PEOPLE FIRST CAME TO THE NEW WORLD, WE WERE STARVING, DESTITUTE. THE AMERICANS CALLED US "DAGOS," "WOPS," AND "GUINEAS." THEY SPIT ON US AND DISPARAGED OUR ITALIAN HERITAGE.

BUT WE WOULD *NOT* BE DOWNTRODDEN...WE *TOOK* WHAT WE WANTED, CARVED IT FROM THE VERY HEART OF THIS CITY. WE CREATED AN *EMPIRE*, WROUGHT FROM POWER AND BAPTIZED IN THE BLOOD OF OUR ENEMIES.

THIS LIFE WE HAVE CHOSEN...IT IS A *NECESSITY*. NOT A GAME.



STIRRING... NO DOUBT.

BUT I EMBRACE A *DIFFERENT* IDEAL...I TOO HAVE TAKEN AS I SEE FIT. NOT DUE TO WANT, BUT ONLY BECAUSE I *CAN*...AND I *DARE* THE WORLD TO STOP ME!



THEN PERHAPS YOU SHOULD CONFRONT YOUR SHADOWY CHALLENGER *HEAD ON?*

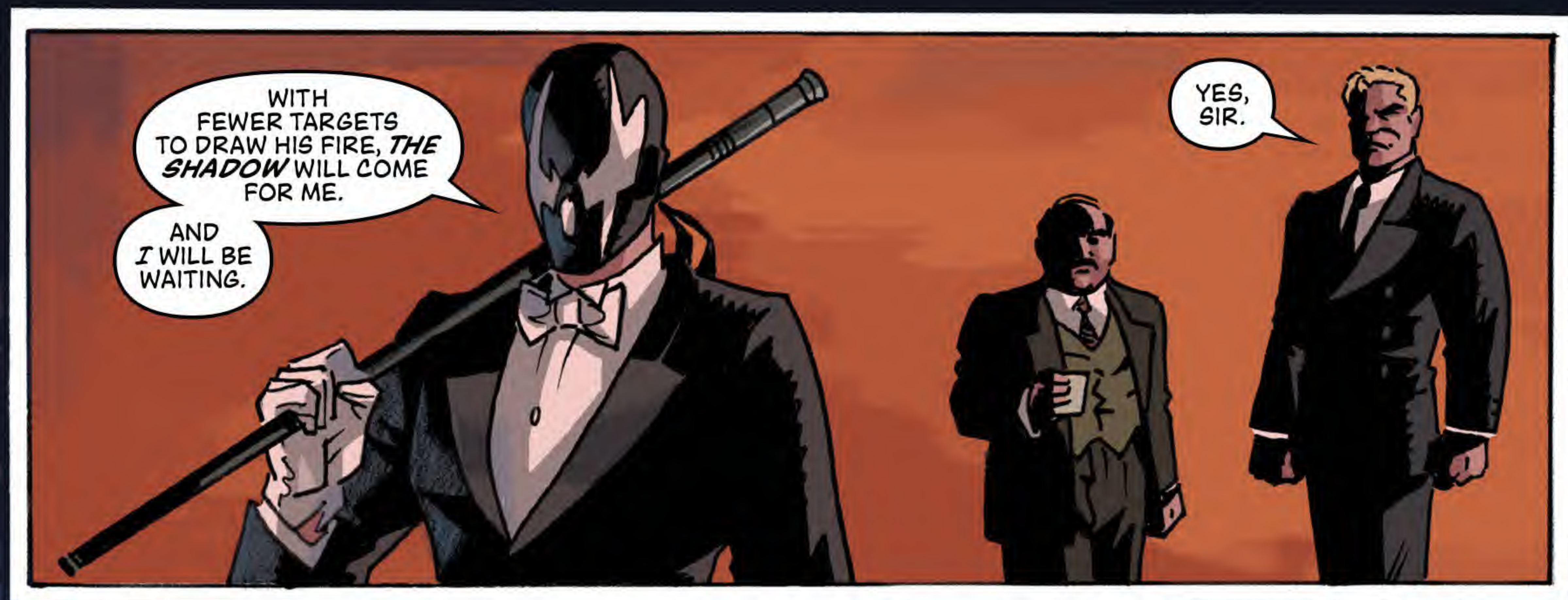
Ahh... HE CERTAINLY SEEMS *EAGER* TO CROSS YOUR PATH AGAIN.



VERY WELL.

HAVE OUR MEN LIE LOW FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS. NOTHING OUT OF OUR ORDINARY LINES OF BOOTLEGGING, GAMBLING, AND PROSTITUTION.

S-SURE THING. YOU GOT IT!



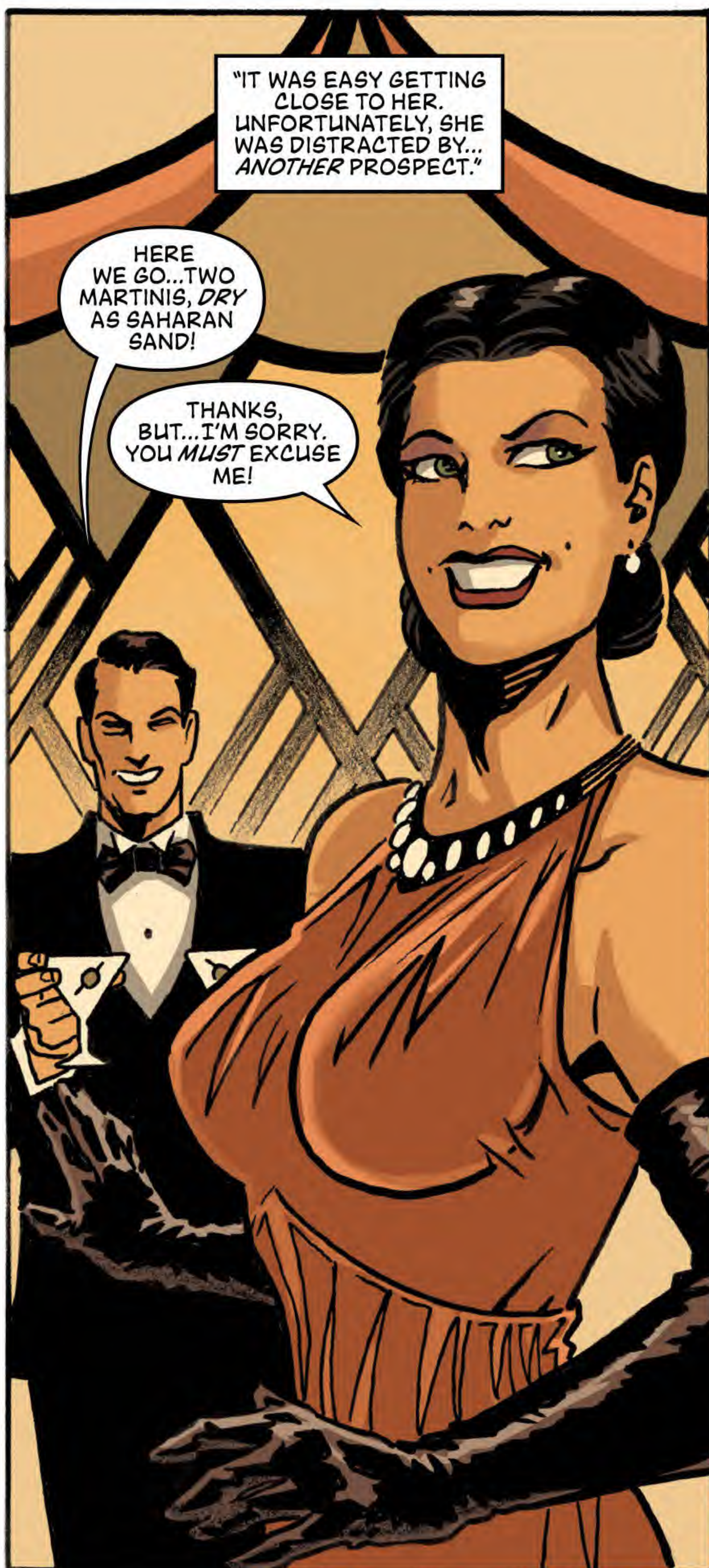


REPORT.

AS PER
YOUR ASSIGNMENT,
I ESTABLISHED CONTACT
WITH *SOFIA VALENTI*.
THAT PART WASN'T
DIFFICULT.

SHE'S A
STRIKING WOMAN
AND, *DESPITE* HER
SHADY PEDIGREE,
SHE'S WELL KNOWN
AND LIKED ON THE
NIGHTCLUB SOCIAL
SCENE.

AND SHE
APPRECIATES
THE ATTENTION
OF MEN.



"IT WAS EASY GETTING
CLOSE TO HER.
UNFORTUNATELY, SHE
WAS DISTRACTED BY...
ANOTHER PROSPECT."

HERE
WE GO...TWO
MARTINIS, *DRY*
AS SAHARAN
SAND!

THANKS,
BUT...I'M SORRY.
YOU *MUST* EXCUSE
ME!



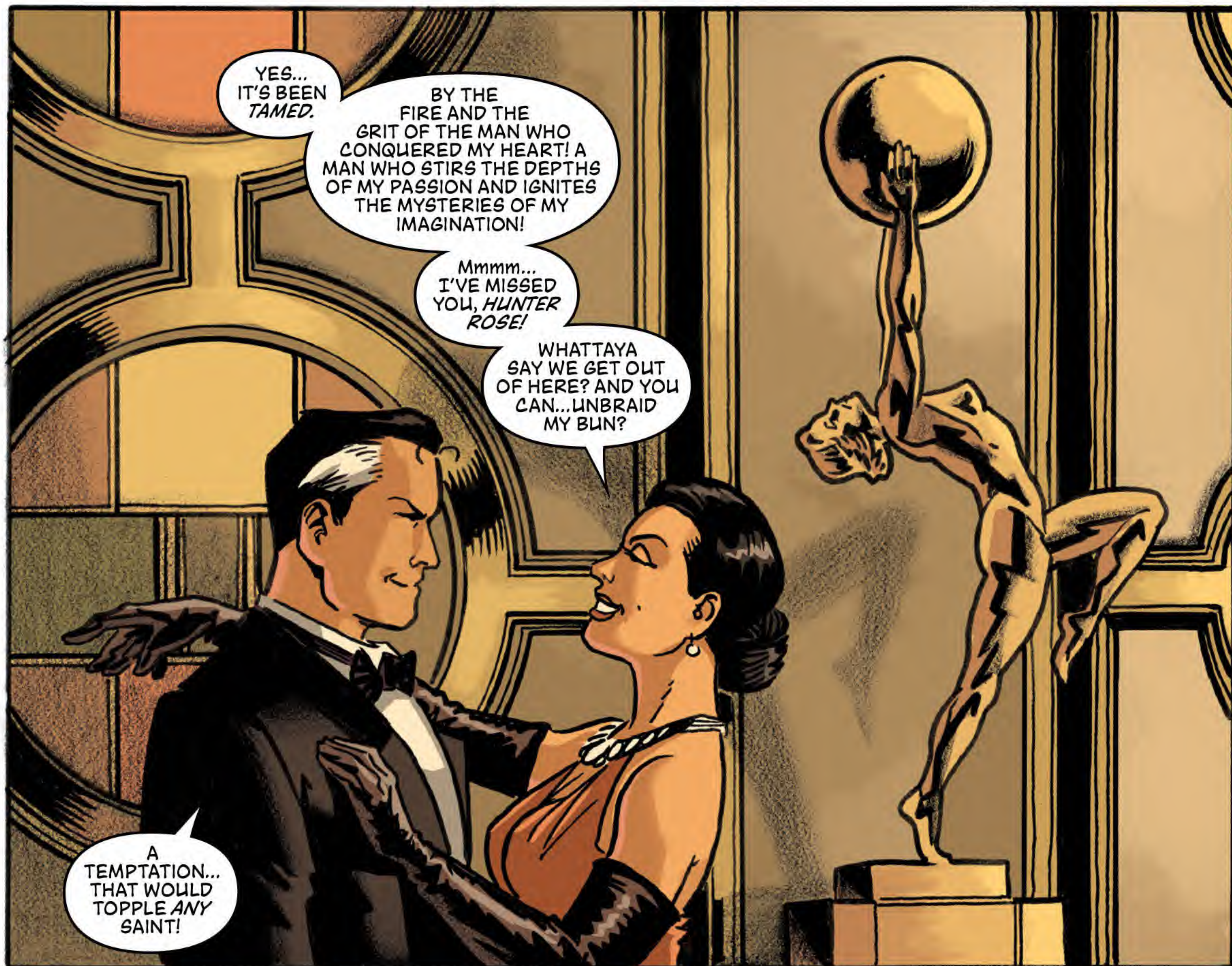
WELL,
WELL! OUR
"GREATEST
LIVING
AUTHOR"...



I HAVEN'T
SEEN YOU IN A WHILE.
BUSY PENNING THE
NEXT MASTERPIECE,
I SUPPOSE?

GOOD
EVENING, MISS
VALENTI.

YOUR
HAIR...



YES...
IT'S BEEN
TAMED.

BY THE
FIRE AND THE
GRIT OF THE MAN WHO
CONQUERED MY HEART! A
MAN WHO STIRS THE DEPTHS
OF MY PASSION AND IGNITES
THE MYSTERIES OF MY
IMAGINATION!

Mmmm...
I'VE MISSED
YOU, *HUNTER*
ROSE!

WHATTAYA
SAY WE GET OUT
OF HERE? AND YOU
CAN...UNBRAID
MY BUN?

A
TEMPTATION...
THAT WOULD
TOPPLE ANY
SAINT!



AND A
LUXURY THAT
I'M AFRAID WE CAN
NO LONGER DARE
RISK.

WHAT--?!



BUT...
WHAT DO YOU
MEAN?! I--

BECAUSE
YOU *CANNOT*
BE SEEN WITH
THAT MAN...BOTH
IN AND *OUT* OF
HIS MASK.

A WOMAN OF *YOUR*
BACKGROUND SURELY
UNDERSTANDS THE NEED
FOR SECRECY.



YES...
OF COURSE.
Y-YOU'RE
RIGHT.

YOU CANNOT
BE BOTH HUNTER
ROSE'S PARAMOUR AND
GRENDL'S QUEEN. FROM
HERE ON, WE MUST ONLY
MEET COVERTLY.

SO
LOVELY TO SEE
YOU AGAIN, MISS
VALENTI. I HOPE YOU
ENJOY THE REST OF
YOUR EVENING.



WELL...
LOOKS LIKE
IT'S YOU AND ME,
HANDSOME. WHAT
WAS YOUR NAME
AGAIN?

SPLENDID!

AND
IT'S HARRY.
HARRY
VINCENT.

"AFTER THAT, SHE WAS
PLEASANT ENOUGH BUT
OBVIOUSLY DISTRAUGHT
BY HIS REJECTION."

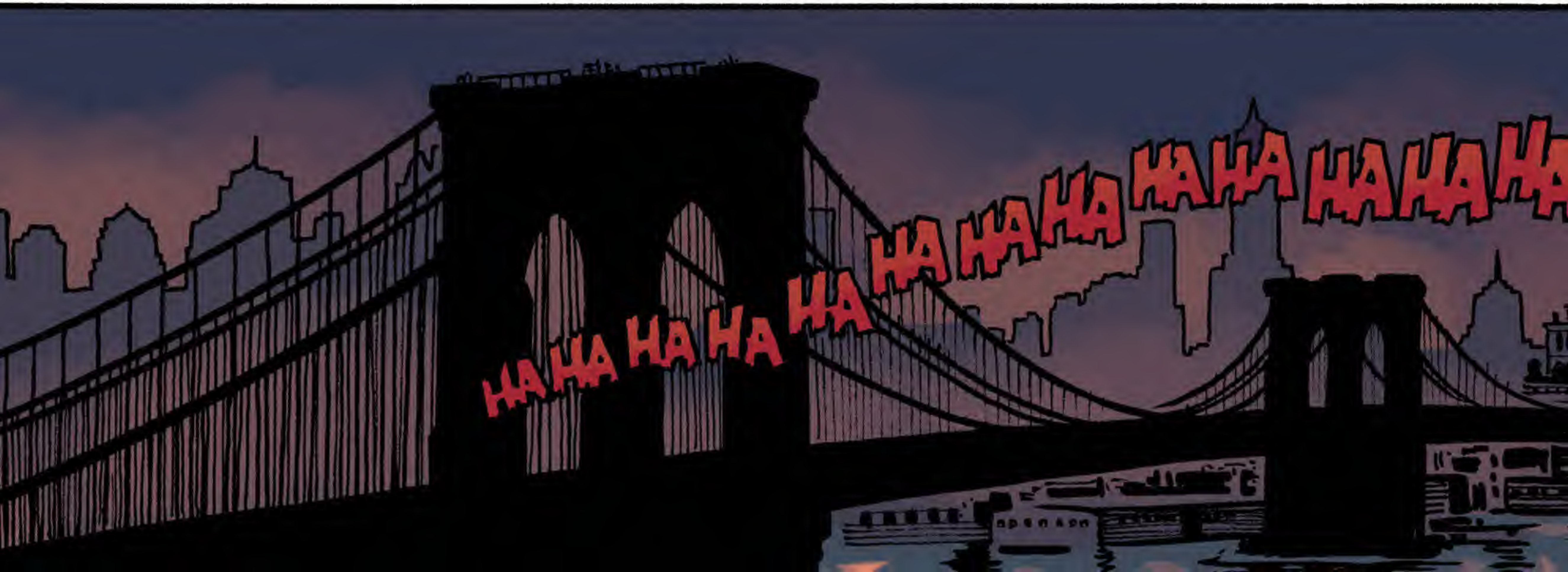


I LATER
DISCOVERED HE'S A
BUDDING YOUNG AUTHOR
OF SOME RENOWN --
HUNTER ROSE.

AND
YOU'RE *CERTAIN*
YOU HEARD HIM
WHISPER THE NAME
"GRENDL"?

QUITE.
NEITHER OF THEM
EVEN GLANCED IN MY
DIRECTION. COULDN'T
TEAR THEIR EYES OFF
EACH OTHER.

AND
NOW...*THE
SHADOW
KNOWS!*





In truth, I really had no plan for where I would go and what my new life would entail.

I'd been his *friend and companion* for so long that I no longer knew quite how to live a "normal" life.

If only he'd --



MARGO?



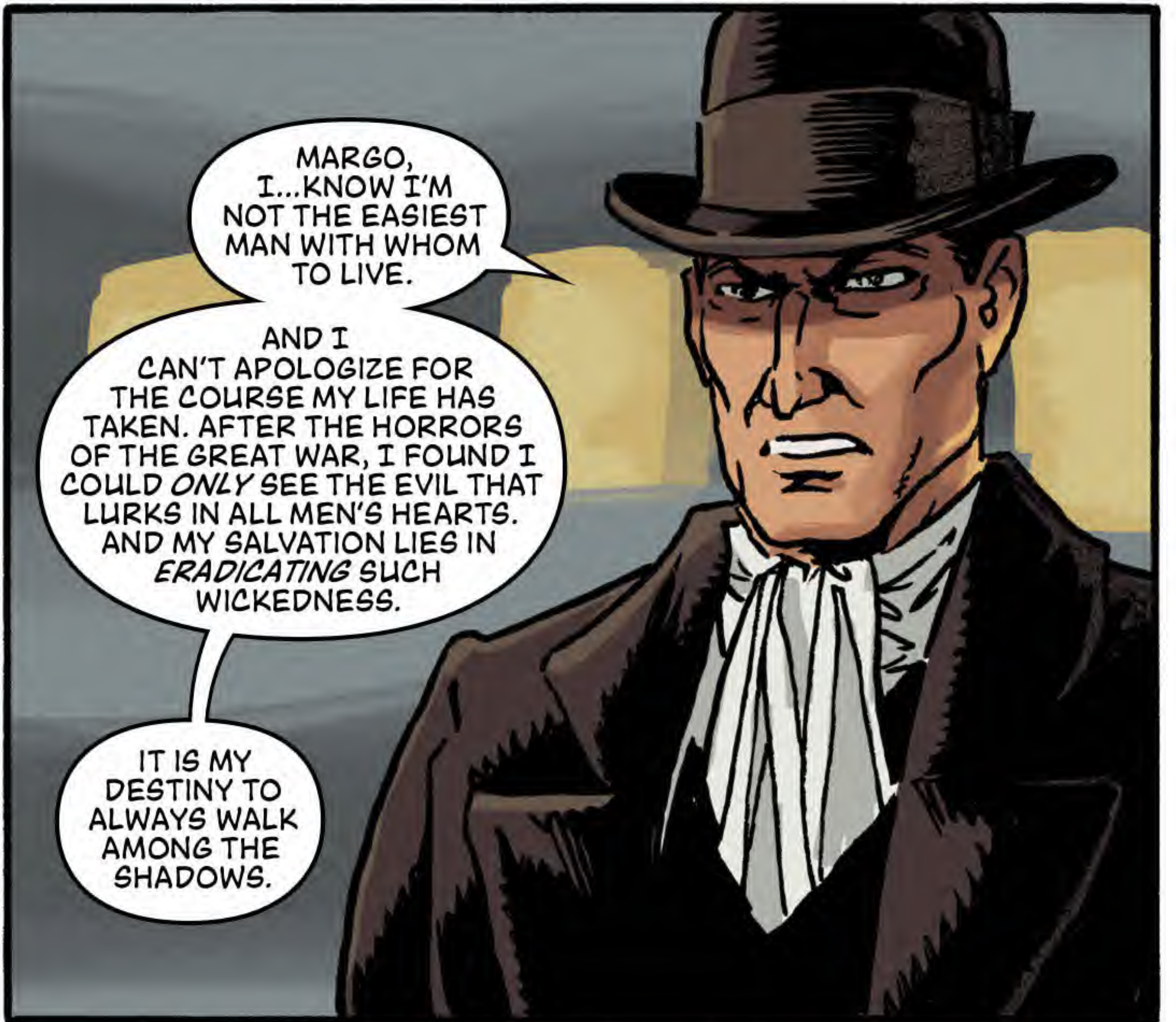
HELLO, LAMONT.

COME TO SAY GOODBYE?



SOMETHING WRONG?

NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS...



MARGO, I...KNOW I'M NOT THE EASIEST MAN WITH WHOM TO LIVE.

AND I CAN'T APOLOGIZE FOR THE COURSE MY LIFE HAS TAKEN. AFTER THE HORRORS OF THE GREAT WAR, I FOUND I COULD ONLY SEE THE EVIL THAT LURKS IN ALL MEN'S HEARTS. AND MY SALVATION LIES IN ERADICATING SUCH WICKEDNESS.

IT IS MY DESTINY TO ALWAYS WALK AMONG THE SHADOWS.



BUT YOU...YOU WERE ALWAYS A RAY OF LIGHT AMIDST THAT DARKNESS. YOU WERE NEVER JUST ONE OF MY AGENTS.



YOU'RE... THAT IS, I --



SHUT UP, LAMONT...



DOES THIS MEAN...?

YES. I'LL STAY.

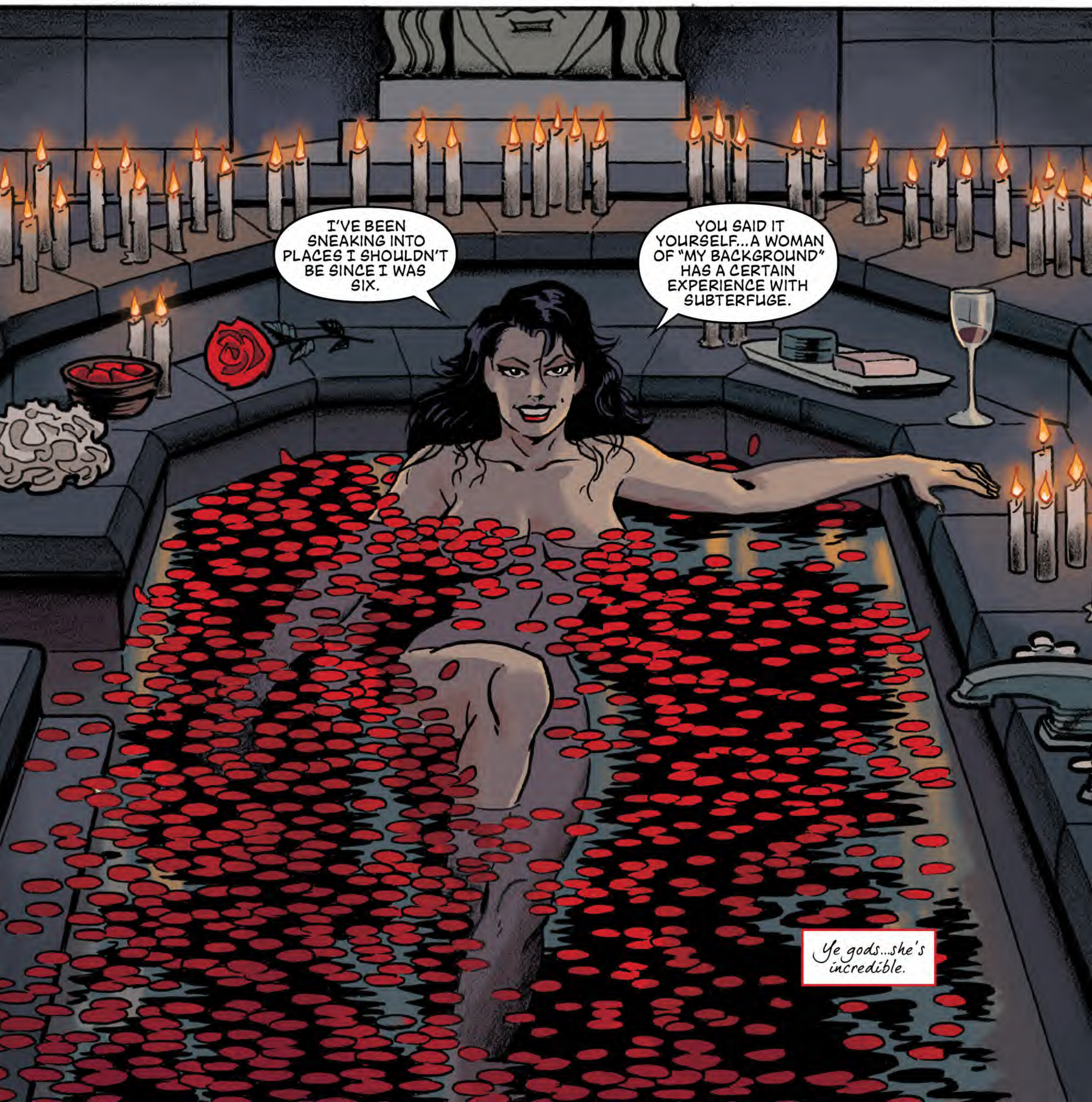


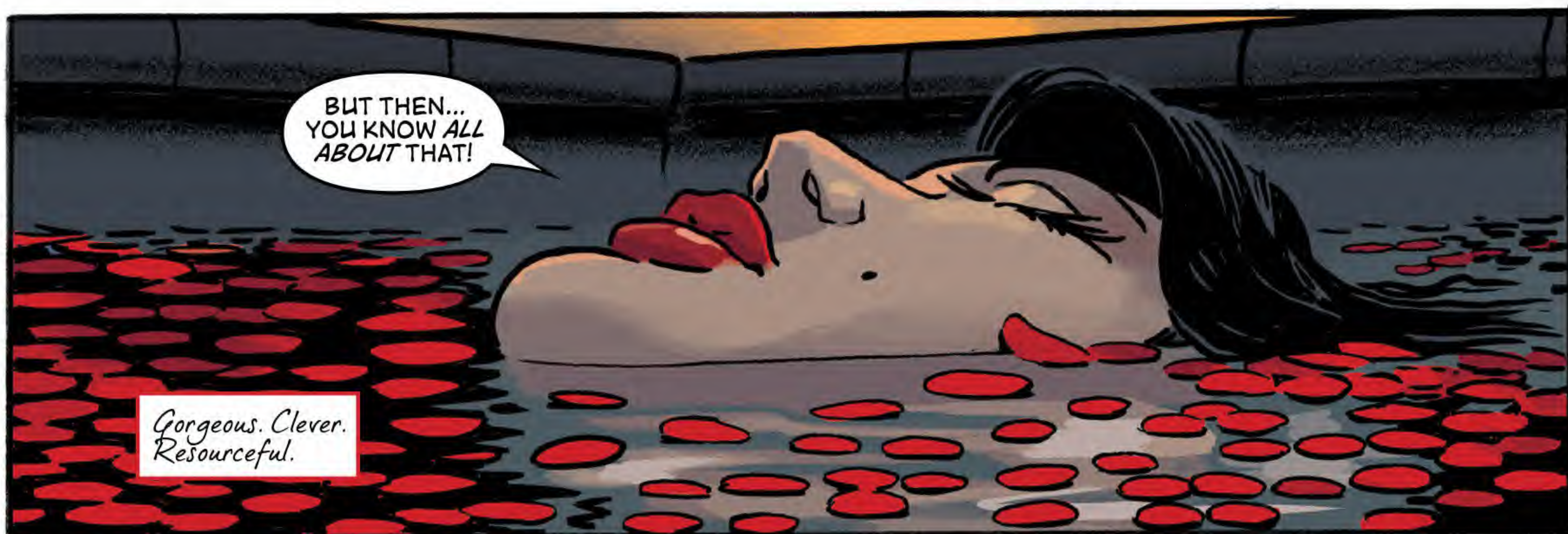
AND NOW, I SUPPOSE...THERE'S SOME URGENT CRISIS THAT DEMANDS OUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION?

INDEED. THE ENDGAME IS NIGH...AND I HAVE NEED OF YOUR PENETRATING GAZE!

I can't help but feel all giddy when he talks like that.

So sue me!





BUT THEN...
YOU KNOW *ALL*
ABOUT THAT!

Gorgeous. Clever.
Resourceful.



WELL...I
NEVER SAID
YOU *SHOULDN'T*
BE IN HERE.

IF I'M TO BE *GREDEL'S*
QUEEN, I MUST SEE TO *ALL* YOUR
NEEDS. PROVIDE COMFORT AND
SUPPORT BUT ALSO INSIGHT...
AND WARNING.



And fearless.

YES.
I WANT
THAT...

I
KNOW, MY
LOVE.



YOU
SEE...I THINK
IT'S TIME THAT
WE KILL MY
FATHER.



IT'S ME.
I'M AT VALENTI'S
BUILDING AND
THERE'S BEEN A LOT
OF *VIOLIN CASES*
COMING THROUGH
THE LOBBY.

AND
NOT ONE OF THE
OWNERS LOOKS LIKE
THEY'D KNOW THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
AN *F SHARP* AND A
D MINOR!





BE REASONABLE...

TO STAY AHEAD OF THE OTHER MOBS, WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO OPERATE *BEYOND* OUR BUSINESS AS USUAL. OTHERWISE, WE APPEAR TIMID AND VULNERABLE.

THE SHADOW IS LESS OF A THREAT THAN A REBELLION FROM *WITHIN* THE SYNDICATE ITSELF.

IMPOSSIBLE. NONE WOULD DARE!



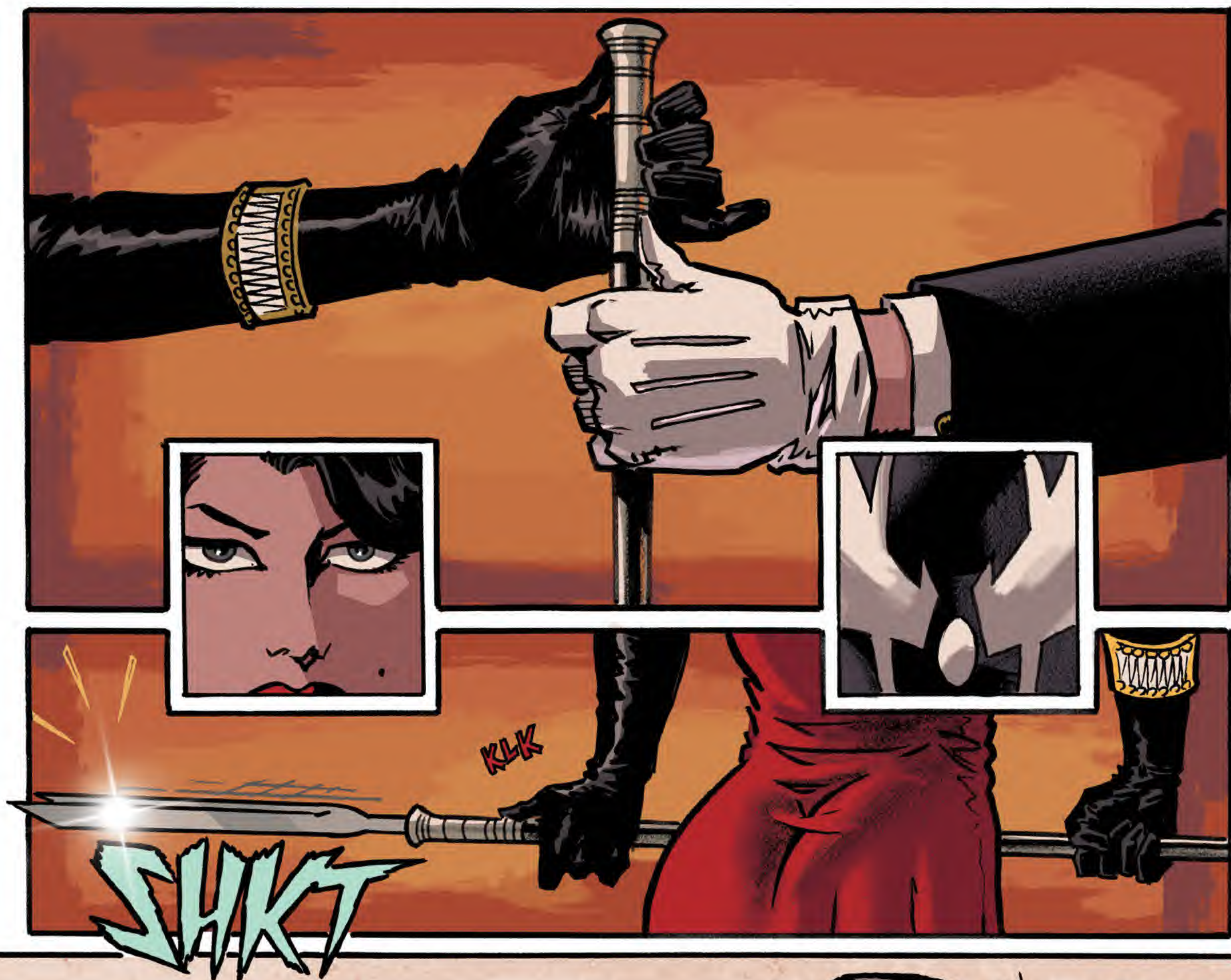
NOW.

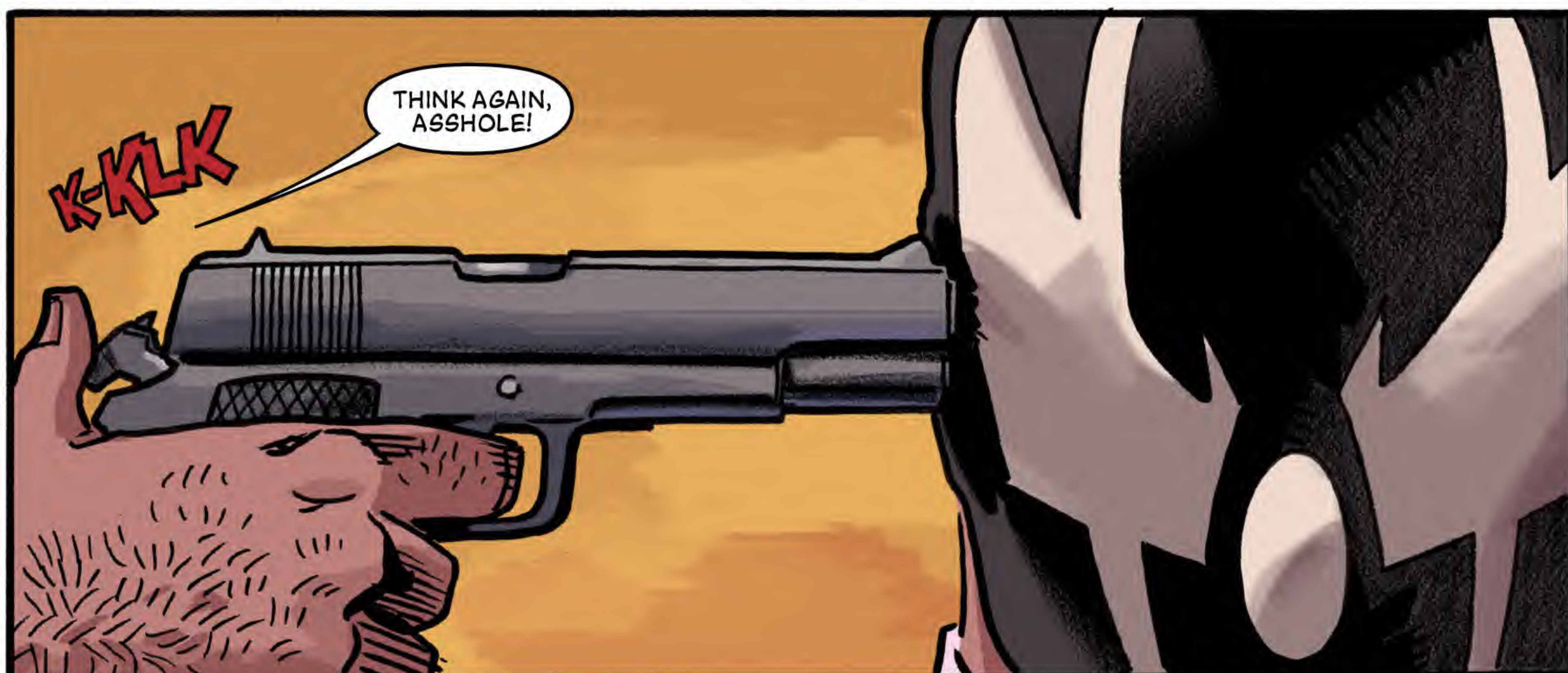


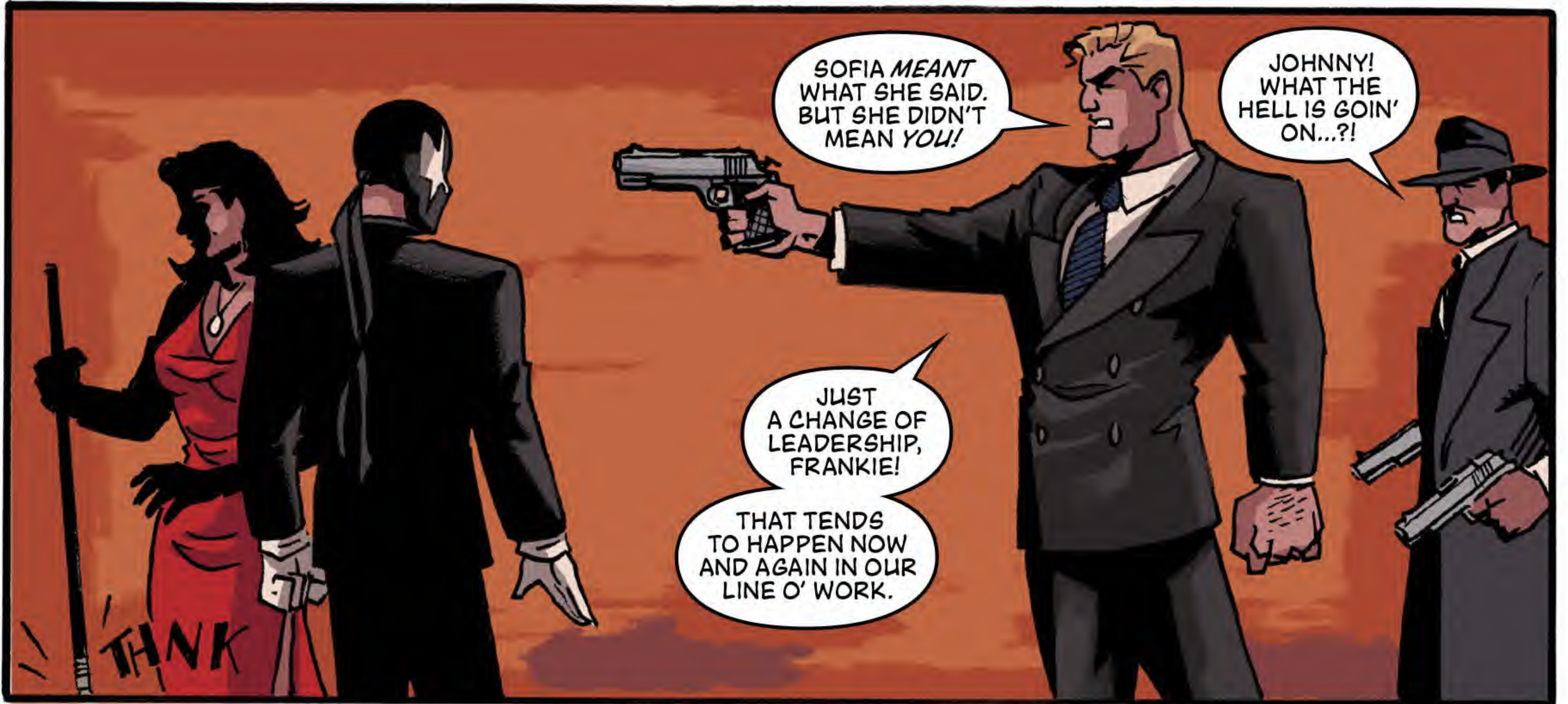
APOLOGIES, MY "MYSTERIOUS OVERLORD," BUT I'M AFRAID THAT THE TENURE OF YOUR GLORIOUS REIGN HAS REACHED ITS END.

AND I SUPPOSE THAT MAKES ME, Ahhh... *VERY DARING!*

SOFIA, DARLING... PLEASE RELIEVE OUR MASKED FRIEND OF HIS ELEGANT *PIG STICKER!*







A comic book panel depicting a tense moment. Three men in suits and fedoras are on the left. The man in the center, with blonde hair, is shouting "NOT HIM! NOT NOW!!" while holding a handgun. To his right, a woman in a red dress is screaming "AAAAAHHHH" with a look of shock. On the far right, a large, dark, imposing figure is partially visible. The background is a warm, orange-yellow color, suggesting a sunset or a fire. The bottom of the panel is filled with large, red, jagged letters spelling out "AAAAAHHHH".

A dynamic comic book illustration featuring a central character, likely a vigilante or anti-hero, wearing a black fedora, a red bandana covering the lower half of their face, and a black tactical suit with a red sash. The character is holding two handguns, one in each hand, in a ready-to-fire stance. They are surrounded by a massive, chaotic explosion of white, angular debris that fills the frame. The background is a stark contrast of red and black, with a jagged, sawtooth-like border at the top. The overall style is high-contrast and action-oriented, typical of modern comic book art.





She...betrayed me.

I was taken in
by a memory...

...of love.

S-SOFIA!
NO!



WELL?
WHAT ARE
YOU WAITING
FOR?

GO
AHEAD...
DO IT!





I was wrong.

This is NOT
the time for me.

I, who fear nothing and
triumph over all, have
fallen victim to that most
pathetic of notions...

NOSTALGIA!



MY
GOD!



WELL?
WHAT ARE YOU
WAITING FOR?! GO
FINISH THEM! RIGHT
OUTSIDE THAT
WINDOW...

IT'S...THE
SERVICE
ROOF. ONE
FLOOR
DOWN...

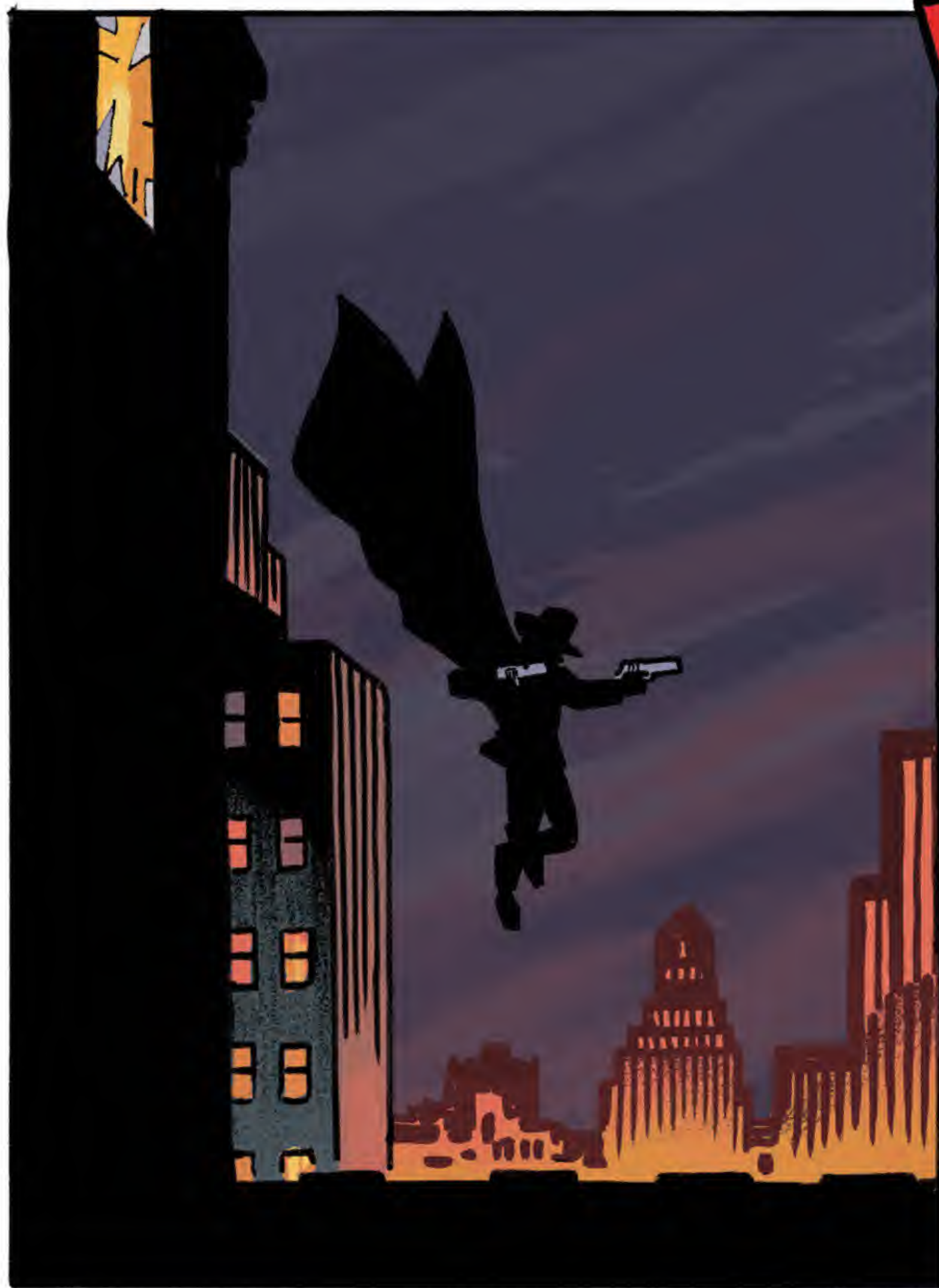
Y-YES,
MA'AM!



Ohhh,
JOHNNY
PALUMBO! WHY
DO I LOVE YOU SO,
Y'BIG APE?!

HA!
I-I DUNNO,
DARLIN'. J-JUST
LUCKY, I
GUESS...!

≡sniff≡
SH-SHUT UP,
JOHNNY!



I MUST SAY I'M IMPRESSED...YOU ALWAYS ARRIVE IN SUCH *STYLE!*

AND IT TAKES A SKILLED AND STEADY HAND TO LAND SUCH A CRAFT IN SUCH A SPACE.

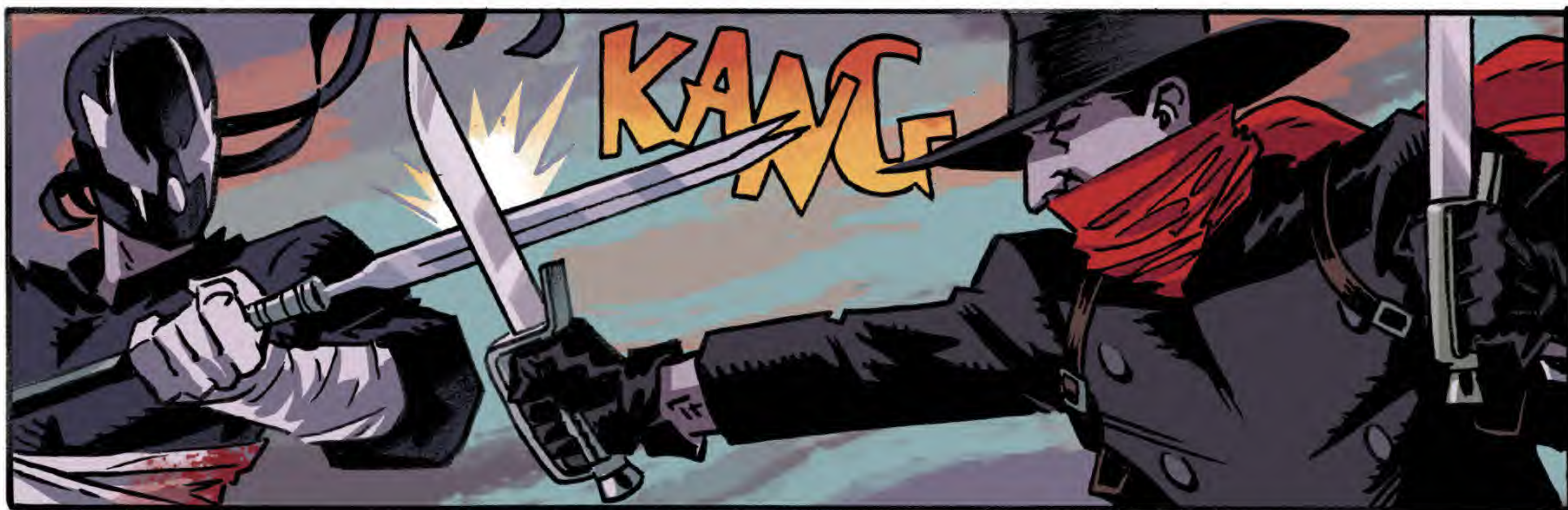
TAKE YOUR ESTEEM BACK TO HELL WITH YOU, DEVIL. *THIS ENDS NOW!*

Ah, BUT, ONCE AGAIN... YOU FIND YOURSELF UNARMED AND AT THE MERCY OF MY BLADES.

OR *LACK* THEREOF...

RUBBISH! YOU'VE GOT A BULLET HOLE IN YOUR SIDE...AND IT SEEMS YOU'VE RUN OUT OF SNAPPY QUOTATIONS IN THE FACE OF YOUR DEFEAT.

JUST AS YOU'VE RUN OUT OF *TIME!*





RUN
OUT OF
TIME?



I AM
NOT OF THIS
TIME!

I EMBODY
A FUTURE THAT
BLOSSOMS WITH EVIL,
THE LIKES OF WHICH
YOU *CANNOT*
IMAGINE!

DESPITE
YOUR PATHETIC
CRUSADE...THE "WEED
OF CRIME" YET
FLOURISHES!

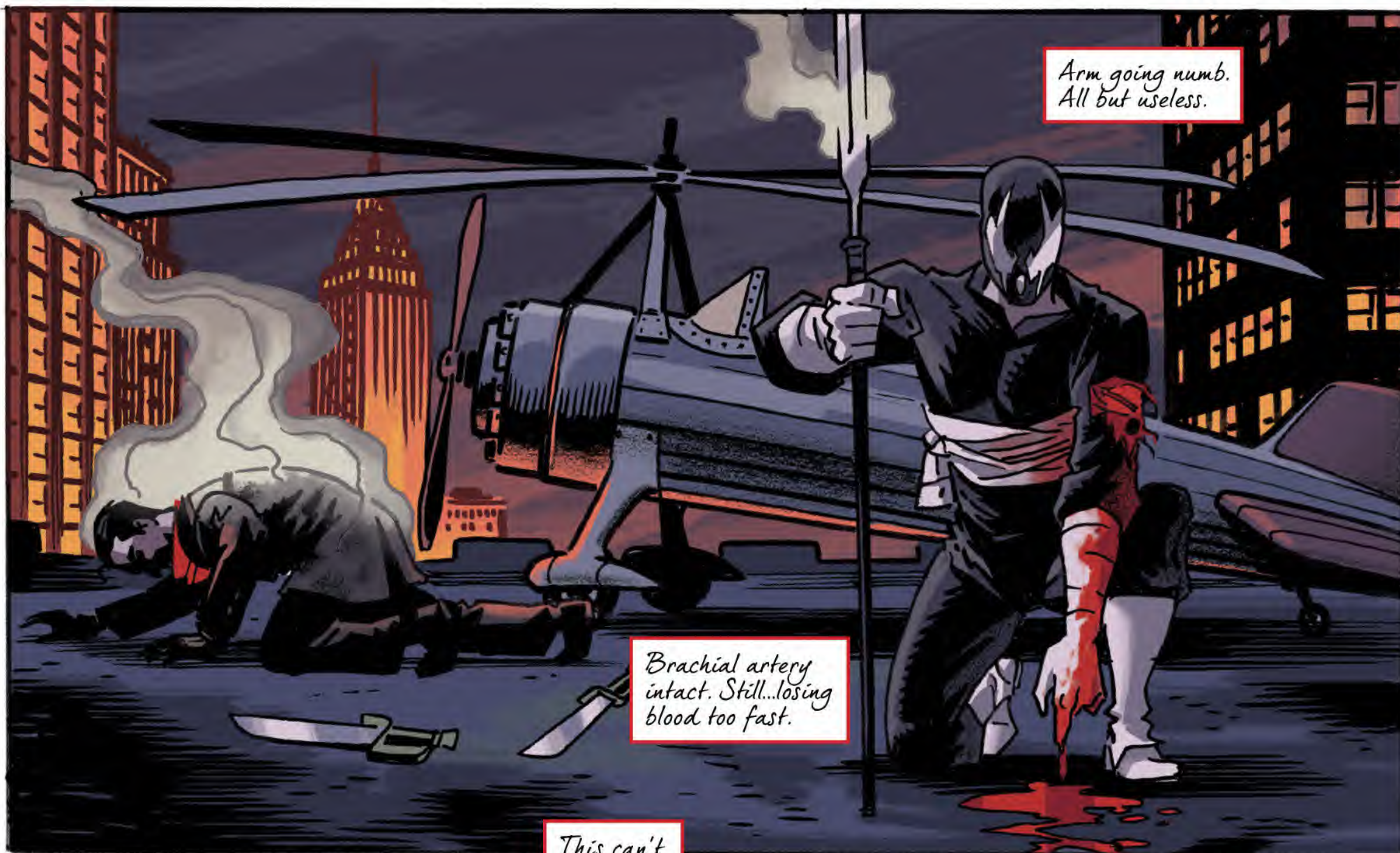


ITS
BITTER FRUIT
HAS FOUND
ITS ULTIMATE
HARVEST...



...IN
ME!





This can't
continue.





WHERE'D THEY GO?

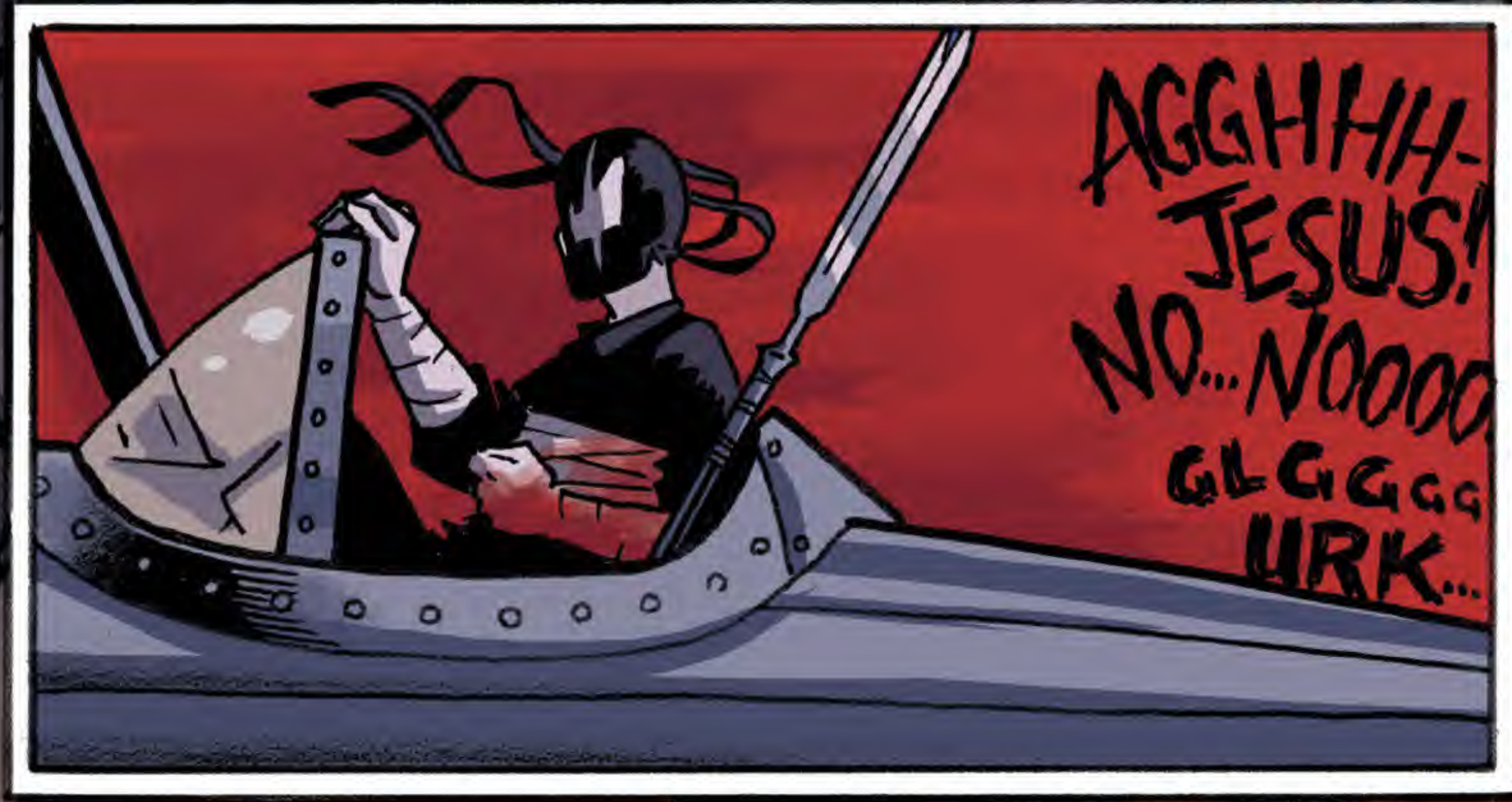
I DUNNO... ALL THAT GUN FLARE.

MAYBE THEY WENT... OVER THE EDGE?



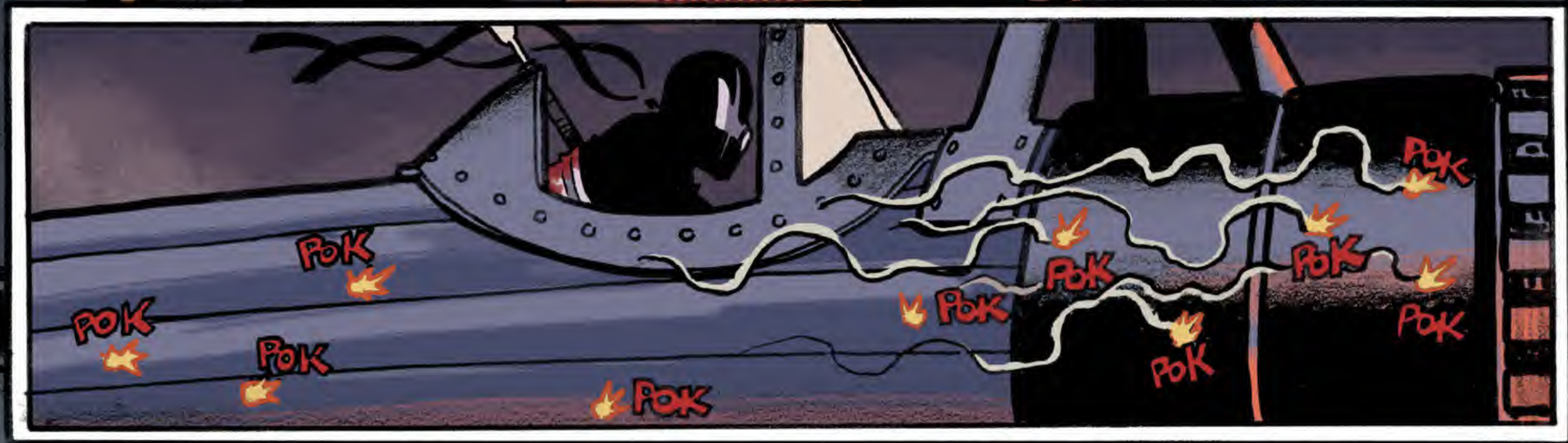
MISS VALENTI'S GONNA WANT BETTER THAN "MAYBE." WATCH THE SHADOWS!

YEAH, YEAH... AIN'T NO ONE SNEAKIN' UP ON ME!



AGGHHH- JESUS! NO... NOOOO GGGGGG URK...



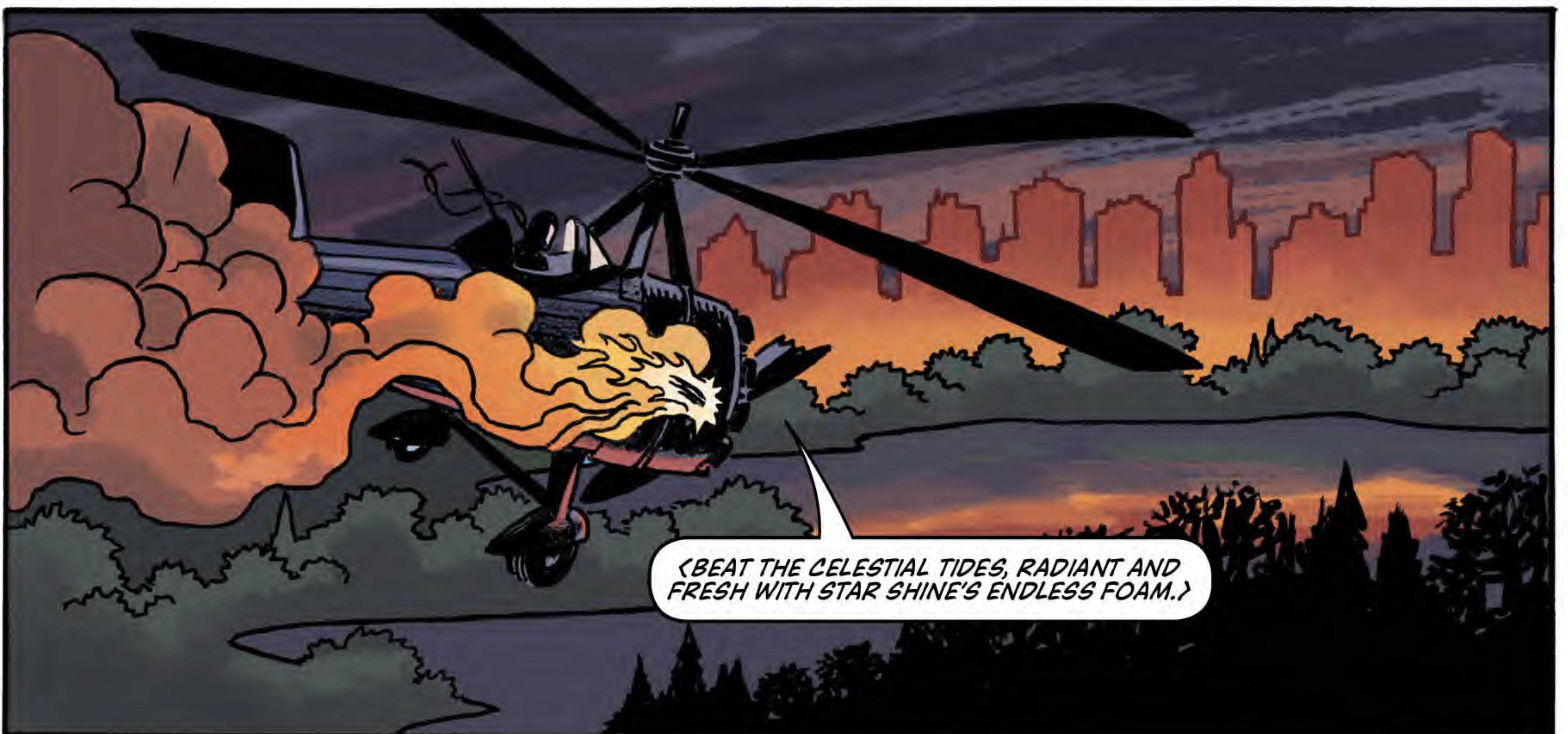




*My only hope now lies
in the scroll, which
I have retained all
these many months.*

*The inscription
below the seal...
written backwards
in Mandarin.*

<O ETERNITY, UPON WHOSE IVORY SHORES...>



*<BEAT THE CELESTIAL TIDES, RADIANT AND
FRESH WITH STAR SHINE'S ENDLESS FOAM.>*

"<NONE IS BACKWARD. NONE IS FORWARD.
ALL IS NEVER. ALL IS NOW.>

"<I HAVE DRAWN THE CURTAIN OF ILLUMINATION.
AND SIFTED THE SOIL OF BOTH ORIGIN AND DEED.>

"<THUS I RESTORE AND RENEW
THE BONDS OF IMPERMANENCE.
WHERE TIME COMMENDS MASTER
AND SERVANT.>

"<EVER FLOWING, NEVER ENDING.>

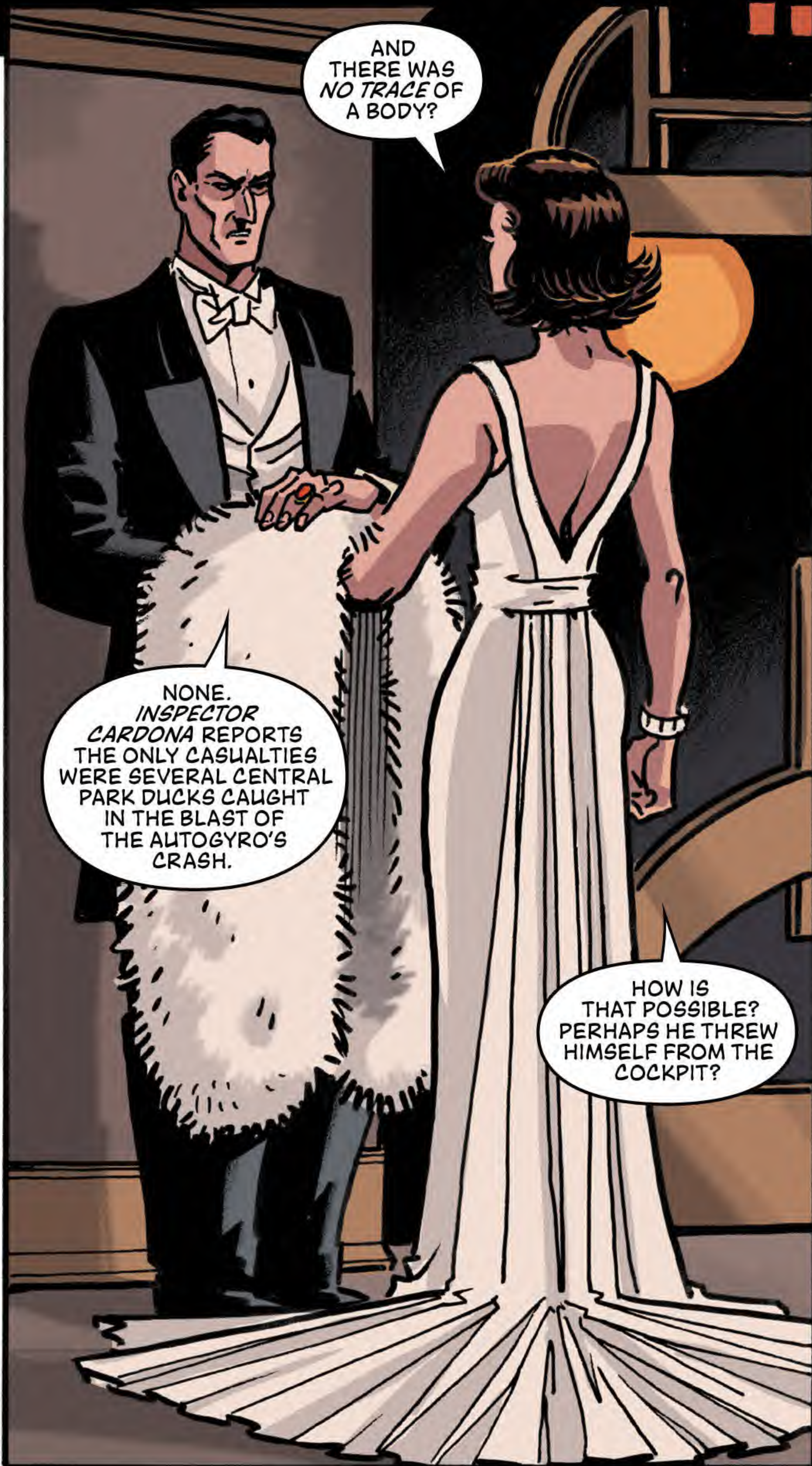
"<BEYOND THE REALM OF PRESCIENCE...>



"<AND DEATH.>"



COBALT CLUB



AND THERE WAS NO TRACE OF A BODY?

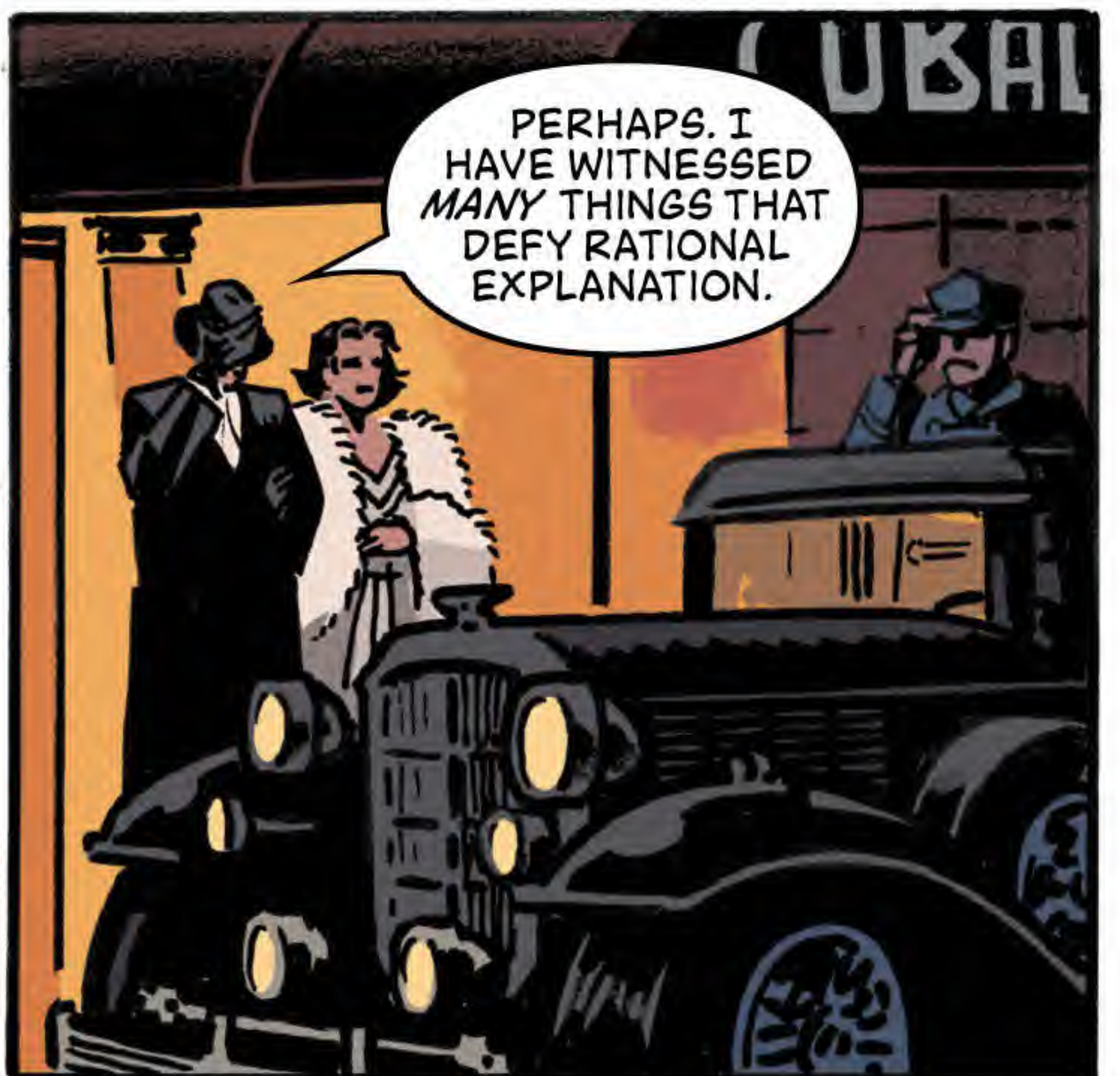
NONE. INSPECTOR CARDONA REPORTS THE ONLY CASUALTIES WERE SEVERAL CENTRAL PARK DUCKS CAUGHT IN THE BLAST OF THE AUTOGYRO'S CRASH.

HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? PERHAPS HE THREW HIMSELF FROM THE COCKPIT?



AND LANDED WHERE? SURELY HIS REMAINS WOULD'VE BEEN DISCOVERED BY NOW. NO, I'M AFRAID I *MUST* CONCEDE THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS CLAIMS.

THAT HE WAS SOME SORT OF TIME TRAVELER?



PERHAPS. I HAVE WITNESSED MANY THINGS THAT DEFY RATIONAL EXPLANATION.

BUT IF THE FUTURE *DOES* HOLD A REALITY THAT CAN GIVE RISE TO THE LIKES OF SUCH A FIEND, I CANNOT LET THAT DETER MY EFFORTS IN THE PRESENT.



TOMORROW MAY HOLD UNTOLD CHALLENGES, BUT I MUST NEVER LET MY RESOLVE WAVER, EVEN IN THE FACE OF EVIL'S SEEMINGLY ETERNAL THREAT.

FOR WHO KNOWS WHAT **GRENDL** LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN?

Was any of it real?

Despite my sincere recollections and, yes, regrets...there is no evidence that Hunter Rose ever existed in that earlier era.

The novel that I wrote and published then exists now only in the steel trap of my memory.

Just like the illusion that I retain some semblance of a heart. A weakness I cannot abide.

Any love I yet know is wielded only in patronage of my darling Stacy.

And, of course... she would never betray me.

THE END



Grendel vs. The Shadow #1 Baltimore Comic-Con exclusive cover by Matt Wagner



Grendel vs. The Shadow #1
variant cover by Matt Wagner



Grendel vs. The Shadow #2
variant cover by Matt Wagner



SPARKS FLY AND BULLETS BLAZE when the original Grendel, Hunter Rose, is transported to 1930s New York and faces off with the original dark-night avenger! The Shadow now faces a foe who may prove to be his match. Two pulp-noir icons go head to head in this grand adventure written and drawn by the legendary, Eisner Award-winning *Grendel* creator Matt Wagner, with colors by Brennan Wagner.



PRAISE FOR MATT WAGNER'S *GRENDEL VS. THE SHADOW*



"*Grendel vs. The Shadow* is a high-speed collision of crazy in a way that only Matt Wagner could produce."

—NERDIST

"The panels inside these pages sting and swoop, horrify and exhilarate, amuse and disturb."

—PATTON OSWALT

(comedian, writer, actor) from his introduction

"Matt Wagner's artwork is gorgeous and he creates a number of panels that evoke raw emotion from the reader; whether it is suspense, fear, shock, or love, he is able to capture all of them."

—ADVENTURES IN POOR TASTE

"[Matt] Wagner creates a story [in *Grendel vs. The Shadow*] where it's easy to get lost in their seductive ideologies and root for both characters."

—NEWSARAMA

"*Grendel vs. The Shadow* . . . is a real joy . . . It just gets better and better with each new page."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES



DYNAMITE

DarkHorse.com | Dynamite.com
COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS / CRIME & MYSTERY